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The ARGOSY

THE WORLD'S BEST STORIES

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The ARGOSY
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A Few Bars in the Key of G

The mystery of a musical message

By CLIFTON CARLISLE OSBORNE

IT was two o'clock, and time for the third watch on the night-herd. These two facts gradually impressed themselves on the consciousness of John Talbot Waring, as he was thumped into wakefulness by the Mexican "horse-wrangler." Disentangling himself from his damp blankets, he sat up and groped for his boots, meanwhile viewing, with that strange satisfaction which misery finds in companionship, the rough pounding process which was being repeated upon the mummy-like figure by his side.

The dim light of the smoky lantern swinging from the ridge-pole of the dripping tent revealed the rolled-up forms of a dozen audibly slumbering cow-punchers, crowded together like sardines in a box. It also made visible an expression of disgust on the features of Mr. Waring, while failing completely to disclose the whereabouts of his missing boots. The sense of touch, however, presently located them lying in a little puddle near the tent flap, and their owner was immediately engrossed in the backbreaking task of forcing his swollen feet into the sodden leather.

"Seems to me, Jack, you ought to know enough to take your boots to bed with you," remarked his neighbour, "Slim" Caywood, as he complacently produced his own high-heeled pair from their nest, dry. "That mornin' last week up on the Pass, when you had to do a war-dance in the snow while they was thawin' out, don't seem to have learned you nothin'."

Waring paused in his struggle long enough to express, in a few well-chosen words, his opinions of boots in general, and his own wet ones in particular. This relief to his feelings seemed to endow him with renewed strength, for, after a few more violent contortions, he accomplished his purpose, and, unrolling his "slicker," which had been serving temporarily as a pillow, enveloped himself in its clammy folds, and followed his tall fellow-victim of stern duty out into the drizzling rain.

There was a moon above the heavy clouds, but it might as well have been on the other side of the earth for all the assistance it gave in the operation of saddling two of the picketed horses. The herd lay to the north of the camp, and, settling reluctantly into their soggy seats, the drowsy riders turned their horses in that direction, trusting to the instinct of the animals to find the cattle. The darkness was intense, and the wiry little beasts were obliged to pick their way cautiously over the rough ground lying between the camp and the spot where the herd had been "bedded down" for the night.

Presently the sound of a hoarse voice tunefully raised in a dismal minor melody came faintly to their ears, and as they neared the singer they became aware that he was entreating the public to "take him to the graveyard, and place a sod o'er him,"

varying the monotony of this request by begging someone to "bury him not on the lone prairie." The effect of this mournful music was indescribably gruesome, and Waring found himself wondering with considerable impatience why cow-punchers invariably choose such gloomy themes for their songs, and then set them to the most funereal tunes imaginable.

Approaching carefully to avoid starting the cattle, the two riders separated, and, relieving the tired watchers, commenced their dreary three hours' vigil on opposite sides of the herd. The cattle were unusually quiet, needing little attention, and Waring had ample opportunity to reflect on the disadvantages of a cow-puncher's life as he rode slowly along the edge of the black mass of sleeping animals. The rain dripped from the limp brim of his sombrero, and ran in little streams from the skirts of his oilskin coat into his already soaking boots. The chill wind, sweeping down from the mountains, pierced his damp clothes, and made him shiver in the saddle. For the hundredth time within a week, Waring condemned himself as an unutterable ass for relinquishing the comforts of civilization for this hard life among the rough and dangerous slopes of Colorado.

He recalled his arrival on the range six months before, a "tenderfoot," and the various tribulations he had endured incident to his transformation into a full-fledged cow-puncher. He remembered with a smile the painful surprise occasioned by his first introduction to a pitching horse. Of the hardships and dangers which come to every rider of the range, he had experienced his share, and faced them bravely, thereby winning the respect of the rough, lion-hearted men among whom he had cast his lot.

But all the weary months had been wasted; he had failed in his object; he could not forget. He was not the first to learn that one cannot escape memory merely by crossing the continent. It even seemed to him that, instead of growing more endurable with time, the soreness in his heart and the sting of regret increased with every passing day. He wondered if she felt the separation—if she cared. As his thoughts wandered back over the past two years, he recalled every incident of their acquaintance as distinctly as though it had occurred but yesterday. The day he had first seen her, as she stepped gracefully out beside the piano to sing at a *musicale* he had attended—the song she had sung—

"The hours I spent with thee, dear heart,
Are as a string of pearls to me."

—the sweet days which followed—their enjoyment together of symphony, oratorio, and opera; for both being amateurs of no mean ability, they had met—and loved—upon the common ground of their love of divine harmony.

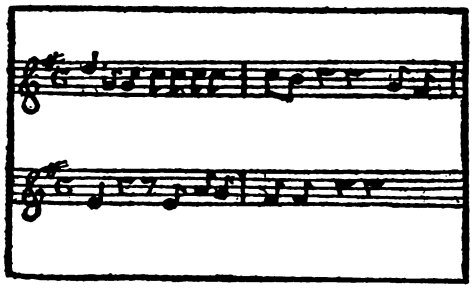
He looked into the blackness of the night, and could see her as she appeared on that wonderful day when he had met her at the altar of Trinity Church, and spoken the words that were to bind them together through life. How beautiful she was! And how proud he had been of her as they walked down the broad aisle and out into the brilliant June sunshine, followed by the grand chords of Mendelssohn's masterpiece. He looked back at their wedding trip as a beautiful dream. The noble mountains of New Hampshire seemed to have been created as a setting for their happiness; the great hotels only to cater for their pleasure. How well he remembered the return to the lovely home he had prepared for her, and the first dear days within its walls! How happy they had been, and how he had loved her! *Had* loved her? He *did* love her. That was his sorrow. He realized that as long as he had life, his whole heart would be hers.

And then the shadow had come over their home. He asked himself bitterly why he had not been more patient with her, and made allowances for her high spirit and quick temper. She was such a child! He could see now that he had been to blame many times in their quarrels, when at the time he had sincerely believed himself in the right. Should he go back to her, and admit that he had been wrong? Never! The memory of that last day was too clear in his mind. The words she had spoken in the heat of her anger had burned themselves into his soul, and could not be forgotten. Waring straightened in the saddle, and the hot blood rushed to his face. He wondered now that he had been able to answer her so calmly. He recalled every word he had said:

"Your words convince me that we cannot live together any longer. I will neither forget nor forgive them. I am going away. You are at liberty to sue for a divorce if

you care to do so. Three years, I believe, is the time required to substantiate a plea of desertion." That was all. Without another word he had left her, standing white and motionless in the centre of the dainty chamber, and had gone from the beautiful home in white-hot rage, to come out here to the wildest spot he could find, and plunge into the perilous life he was leading, in the vain effort to forget.

He pulled down the dripping brim of his sombrero to shelter his face from the stinging wind, and resolutely turned his thoughts in other directions. He speculated vaguely on the condition of his considerable property, and wondered indifferently how his agents were managing it. His friends at the clubs—did they miss him? From them his thoughts strayed to the strange postal-card he had received the day previous, and he began to puzzle his brain in the effort to decide who had sent it, and what it could mean. It had been directed in care of his attorney, and forwarded by the lawyer to the remote mountain post-office where Waring received his mail. It was an ordinary postal-card, its peculiarity consisting in the fact that the communication on the back was composed not of words, but music—four measures in the key of G. This was the message:



He had hummed the notes over and over, and though they had a strange familiar sound, yet he could not place the fragment, nor even determine the composer. His failure to decipher the enigma annoyed him. It had a meaning, of that he was convinced. But what could it be? Who could have sent it? Among his friends were many musicians, any one of whom might have adopted such a method of communicating with him. He began to hum the phrase as he rode round and round the cattle.

The wind was dying out, and the rain had ceased. On the eastern mountain-tops a faint rose tint was dimly visible; another hour of monotonous watching, and then for a hot breakfast beside the camp-fire. Waring, abandoning the riddle of the card, began to sing to pass the time, and his rich baritone rang out above the sleeping herd. The light stole slowly over the peaks, and chased the shadows from the plain. The camp awoke, and the men crawled shivering from the tent. The cook's fire whirled showers of sparks aloft. One by one the tired cattle stirred, rose, and commenced to graze. Waring still sang, carelessly passing from snatches of opera to lines of sacred harmony.

Suddenly, whilst in the midst of a passage from one of the great works of a master composer, he stopped short in surprise. *He was singing the notes on the card!* It had come to him like a flash. He tore open his coat, and drew the card from an inner pocket. There was no mistake. He had solved the mystery. Almost mechanically he reached for a pencil, and wrote the words under the lines of music, added a signature, and gazed long and earnestly, his face a perfect kaleidoscope of changing expressions; then, with a wild shout, he wheeled his horse and rode furiously to the camp.

Pulling up with a jerk that almost lifted the iron-jawed bronco from the ground, he literally hurled himself from the saddle, and reached the "Boss" in two bounds.

"I must be in Denver to-night! I want your best horse—quick!"

The Boss stared at him in astonishment.

"Why, man, it's a hundred an' twenty miles. You're crazy!"

Waring fairly stamped in his impatience.

"It's only sixty to Empire," he cried, "and I can get the train there! It leaves at one o'clock, and I can make it, if you'll lend me Star. I know he's your pet horse, and you never let anyone ride him; but I tell you, Mr. Coberly, this means everything to me. I simply *must* get there!"

Coberly scowled.

"You ought 'o know, Jack, that I won't lend Star; so what's the use o' askin'? None o' the other horses can get you over there in that time, so you might's well give it up. What in thunder's the matter with you that you're in such a confounded rush?"

Waring thought a moment, and then, drawing the Boss beyond earshot of the listening cow-punchers, spoke to him

rapidly and earnestly, finally handing him the postal-card. Coberly scanned it intently, and a change came over his face. When he looked up, it was with an expression of respect mingled with amazement, as he said:

"Why didn't you show me this at first? O' course you can have the horse. Hi, there! Some o' you boys round up the horses an' rope Star for Mr. Waring! Jump lively!"

The men made a rush for their saddles, and in an incredibly short time several of them were racing across the plain in the direction of the bunch of horses. Waring drove into the tent, and began gathering his few possessions. Coberly plunged around outside, giving strident orders.

"Roll up some grub for Mr. Waring quick! Nick, you get his canteen an' fill it out o' my mug. Fly around now!"

A rush of hoofs announced the arrival of the horse and his escort, just as Waring emerged from the tent with his little bundle. A dozen hands made quick work of saddling, and, with a hurried good-bye all around, he swung himself up and astride of the magnificent animal and was off on his long ride. He looked back, and saw the boys in a group around the Boss, who was explaining the cause of his hasty departure. Presently a tremendous yell reached his ears, and he saw hats frantically thrown in the air. He waved his hand in reply, and settled down in the saddle.

¶

THE long pacing stride of Coberly's pet covered the ground in a surprising manner, and eight o'clock found twenty-three miles behind his nimble feet, and the Bar Triangle Ranch in sight. A five-minute stop, and then on across the gently rising country to the stage station at the foot of the great Continental Divide, fifteen miles away. It lacked twenty minutes of ten o'clock when Waring drew rein in the shadow of the giant peaks that towered above him. He unsaddled, and turned the big thoroughbred into the corral. A half-hour's rest would put new life into him. Twenty-two miles to the railroad, and nearly three hours in which to cover it. It seemed possible; but the great range must be crossed, and Waring knew that the ten miles of steep climbing to the snowy summit of Berthoud Pass meant more than twice the distance on the flat plain.

At quarter past ten, Star, refreshed by an energetic rubbing and a mouthful of water, was carrying him up the road, with no apparent diminution of power. Up, up they went, mile after mile, until the plain they had left spread out like a map behind him, and the thick forest had given place to a scattering and scrubby growth of pines. They were nearing timber-line, and the piercing chill of the biting wind testified to the proximity of the snow-covered peaks. Two miles from the top Waring dismounted, and led his panting horse along the icy trail. The rarefied air seemed to burn his lungs as he struggled up the remaining distance to the summit of the Pass, twelve thousand feet above the sea.

Twelve o'clock! He stopped, and anxiously examined the noble beast that had carried him so far and so well. The inspection reassured him. There were plenty of life and energy left in Star yet. Not without reason was he acknowledged the best horse in the country. One hour, and twelve miles to go, the first seven down the steepest road in the State. Could he make it? He must! A final pull at the cinches, and Waring was again in the saddle, racing down the dangerous path towards the sea of dark green forest that stretched far below.

Down sharp pitches and long slopes, around dizzy curves and through deep cañons, slipping, swaying, followed by masses of loose stones and gravel, they went, faster than ever that trail was covered before. The ironshod hoofs struck fire from flinty rocks, as, almost sitting on his haunches, Star would slide twenty feet at a time down an unusually steep grade, recovering his footing with a staggering effort at the bottom. It was perilous work. They reached the timber-line, passed below it, and plunged into the woods. A mile beyond, they flew past the stage at a mad pace, throwing a shower of mud over the astonished passengers.

Down at last to the level road they came, with five miles still to go. Star swung into a strong, easy lope, and his rider drew a long breath. Not till then had he realized the strain of that wild ride. Rounding a turn in the road, he espied a horseman approaching, and turned to pass him. The stranger eyed him sharply as he drew near, and suddenly whipped out a six-shooter.

"Hold up there! I want to talk to you."

For a moment Waring considered the chance of riding over the man, but for a moment only. The stranger looked too determined, and his aim was sure. He pulled up, raging:

"I suppose you want my money!" he snarled. "Well, you're welcome to it if you'll leave me enough to pay my fare to Denver."

The other grinned.

"That's a good bluff, but it won't go. I'm the sheriff, an' what I want to know is where you're going with Joe Coberly's horse?"

"Oh! Is that all you want?" said Waring, relieved. "Why, I've been working for Coberly, and he lent me the horse to ride over here to catch the train." And he gathered his reins to ride on.

"Hold on, young man," and the sheriff raised his gun suggestively, "that yarn won't do! I know old Joe, an' I happen to know that he wouldn't lend that horse to his own brother, let alone one of his cow-punchers. I guess I'll have to lock you up till the boys come over after you."

Waring groaned.

"Look here, Mr. Sheriff, I'm telling you God's truth. Coberly let me take the horse, because it was the only one that could get me over there in time to catch the train, and I had to be in Denver to-night without fail."

His captor shook his head.

"It's no use, my friend; your story won't hold water! Why're you in such a tearin' hurry, anyway?"

Waring remembered the postal-card. He reached into his breast-pocket and produced it.

"That is my reason for haste," he said, "and that is why Coberly let me take the horse." And he added a few words of explanation.

Keeping his captive carefully covered with the muzzle of the ·45 Colt he carried, the officer rode closer, and took the card. As he read it, his face lighted up, and he lowered his gun.

"That's all right, youngster. I'm sorry I stopped you. I don't wonder Joe lent you the horse. I'd 've done the same, even if I'd had to walk myself. I hope you won't miss the train. I'll ride down to the station with you, as some of the boys might want to string you up on account o' the horse—everybody knows him."

Overjoyed at this satisfactory turn of affairs, Waring touched Star with the spur and rode forward, with the repentant sheriff by his side, their horses in a rapid gallop. Mounting a rise, they saw the town before them, a mile distant. *The train was at the station!* Another touch of the spur, and Star stretched out into a run that gradually left the sheriff behind, well-mounted though he was. A half-mile yet to go! A quarter! The black smoke began to come in heavy puffs from the funnel of the engine, and the line of cars moved slowly away from the station. Then it was that Star showed the spirit that was in him. The quirt fell sharply on his flank for the first time that day, and he bounded forward and swept down upon the town like a whirlwind.

As the usual crowd of train-time loafers lounged around the corner of the station, their attention was attracted by the two swiftly approaching riders, and they paused to watch the race. Presently one cried:

"Hullo! That first horse is Coberly's black, an' he's sure movin', too! The other chap ain't in it. Why, it's the sheriff! An' he's after the other fellow. Horse thief, by thunder! I'll fix him!" And he reached for his hip.

The others took up the cry of "Horse thief!" And as Waring flashed past the building at Star's top speed, a volley of shots greeted him, and the bullets sang around his head. Fortunately, they went wild, and, before any more could be fired, the sheriff tore into the crowd, and roared:

"Stop shootin', you fools! The man's all right; he's only trying to catch the train!" At this there was a laugh, and then a rush to the track, where an unobstructed view of the race could be obtained.

The road ran for a mile beside the rails, as level as a floor. The train was gathering speed with every revolution of the wheels; but Star was travelling, too, and gaining at every jump. The crowd at the station danced and howled in their excitement.

"Will he make it?"

"He's gainin'."

"Look at that horse hump himself."

"Gee, he's movin'!"

"Hooray for the black!"

"He'll make it!"

"He'll make it!"

Waring, with eyes fixed and jaw set, was riding desperately.

Thirty feet! The spectators in the doorway of the last car gazed breathlessly. Twenty feet—and Star straining every nerve and muscle in his body. Ten feet—and still he gained. Only five feet now! Inch by inch he crawled up. He was abreast of the platform! Swerving his flying horse closer to the track, Waring leaned over, and grasping the railings with both hands, lifted himself from the saddle, kicked his feet from the stirrups, and swung over to the steps of the car. The faint sound of a cheer reached him from the distant depot.

After calmly accepting the enthusiastic congratulations of the passengers who had witnessed his dramatic boarding of the train, Waring dropped into a seat with a sigh of relief, and was soon lost in thought. He was roused from his reverie by a touch on the arm, and turned, to find the conductor standing beside him. The sight of that official reminded him of the necessity of paying fare, and he reached into his pocket for the required cash. His fingers encountered nothing more valuable than a knife and some matches. The other pockets were equally unproductive. Then he remembered, with a shock, that he had put his money in the little bundle, at that moment firmly attached to his saddle, some miles to the rear.

¶

IT was maddening. There was nothing to do but throw himself on the mercy of the man in the blue uniform. That person heard his excuses with an impassive face, and merely announced that he would have to get off at the next station. This was not at all in accordance with Waring's plans, and he endeavoured to impress upon the conductor the importance of his being in Denver that evening. He might as well have addressed the Sphinx, so far as any effect his words had on the official, who said, in answer to his entreaties:

"I'd lose my job if I let you ride free. You'll have to get off. It's only ten miles back to Empire, and if you left your money on your saddle, you can soon get it again—that is, if no one has swiped it before you get there."

Waring grew desperate. Was his ride after all to be fruitless? He remembered his reason for haste, and decided to take the conductor into his confidence. Leaning over, he whispered something quickly into his ear, and ended by showing him the postal-card. At first the man looked incredulous, but a glance at Waring's earnest face reassured him. His expression softened, and he handed back the card with a sigh.

"I reckon I'll have to fix for you, but the only way I can do it is to pay your fare out of my own pocket. I'll do that, and you can send me the money. It's three-sixty."

He took a slip from his pocket, upon which he wrote his name and address. This he gave to Waring, together with a cash receipt ticket, and, unheeding the latter's impulsive thanks, continued on his round of collection.

This occurrence reminded Waring of similar difficulties to be overcome in Denver, and he did some hard, rapid thinking as he was being whirled down through Clear Creek Cañon, but by the time the train shot past Table Mountain and out to the plain, his face bore a confident smile. The postal-card had served him well thus far; perhaps its mission was not yet ended.

The car wheels were still turning when he strode through the big station, his heavy spurs ringing on the marble floor. Jumping into a carriage, he was driven to the nearest drug store, where he consulted a directory.

"Number nine hundred South Seventeenth Street!" he cried, as he re-entered the vehicle.

Arriving at his destination, he sprang out, and, saying "Wait!" ran up the steps of a palatial residence.

To the dignified butler who opened the door, he said:

"I wish to see Mr. Foster. My name is Waring. I haven't a card with me."

Instinctively perceiving the gentleman beneath the rough flannel shirt and mud-covered "chaps," the servant politely ushered him into the reception room, saying that he would see if Mr. Foster was in. Apparently he was, for he appeared almost immediately, the personification of keen-eyed, well-groomed finance.

"What can I do for you, Mr.—er—Waring?"

That young man took in every detail of his appearance, and he realized that he had a hard-headed man of business to deal with.

"Mr. Foster," he said, "you are the president of the Denver National Bank,

which, I believe, handles the Western interests of the Second National Bank of Boston?"

The other bowed, and Waring continued:

"I have an account at the Second, and I want you to cash a cheque for me. It is after banking hours, I know, and even if it were not, I have no immediate means of identification."

The banker's features stiffened perceptibly, but Waring went on:

"It is of the greatest importance that I take the Eastern express to-night, or I would not come to you in this irregular way——"

"One moment, Mr. Waring. Pardon me for interrupting you, but it will save your time as well as my own if I say that what you ask is impossible, as you should know. My advice to you is to wire your bank for the money."

Waring broke in impatiently.

"Of course, I know that I can do that, but it means a day's delay, and that is what I want to avoid. See here, Mr. Foster, I am willing to pay any amount within reason for the accommodation, if you will oblige me."

The president began to look suspicious.

"It must be a very urgent matter that requires such haste," he said sarcastically. "Really, Mr. Waring, I must positively decline to do anything for you."

"It *is* an urgent matter!" cried Waring. "I was about to explain to you." And he went on and told of the postal-card and its purport, adding a brief account of his efforts to get to the city in time to take the train that night.

"Let me see the card," said the banker. His voice had taken on a different inflection.

Waring handed him the bit of pasteboard that had played such an important part in his adventures. Mr. Foster scrutinized it closely.

"From what is it taken, did you say?"

Upon hearing the answer, he left the room, to return in a few minutes with a rather bulky musical score, which he laid upon the table, and turned the pages until he found what he sought.

Carefully he compared the music on the card with that of the printed sheet. Then, turning to the younger man, he said, in a kindly voice:

"I will assist you, Mr. Waring. It will, of course, be a purely personal accommodation, as it is contrary to all my business methods, but I cannot resist such an appeal as this. Also, I consider myself a good judge of faces, and I feel safe in trusting yours. What amount do you require?"

Waring fairly beamed with joy.

"A hundred dollars will be sufficient," he replied.

The banker motioned towards a desk.

"Make your cheque for a hundred and fifty. You will need that much, unless you care to travel in your present costume."

Waring made out the proper form, and handed it to the banker. The latter dropped into the vacated chair before the desk, and rapidly wrote a cheque for a like amount, which he passed over, saying:

"You can cash this at the Brown Palace Hotel. I will 'phone the cashier, so you will have no trouble."

Waring tried to thank him, but he would not listen.

"You are perfectly welcome, my boy. I am glad to be able to help you. I envy you, with all my heart. I would give half of all I own to be in your position." And his voice trembled a little. "You have my best wishes for a pleasant journey. Good-bye!" A cordial hand-grasp, and Waring ran down the steps with a light heart, his way at last absolutely clear before him.

"Telegraph office!" he shouted. Ten minutes later, these words were speeding over the wire:

"Postal received. Arrive Boston Friday night. See Luke i, 13. JACK."

When the Chicago Limited pulled out of Denver that evening, John Talbot Waring, clean shaved, and attired in garments of the most approved cut, was standing on the rear platform of the last Pullman, softly humming a fragment from the great oratorio "The Messiah." There was a tender light in his eyes as he gazed at a postal-card he held in his hand.

And the words he sang were:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."

At the same moment, two thousand miles away in the East, a pale young wife was holding a telegram close to her lips. An open Bible lay on the bed beside her.

Turning softly on her pillows, she glanced lovingly at the dainty cradle, and whispered:

"'Thou shalt call his name John.'"

The Scapulary

A Gay Trifler's Ruse and its Dramatic Sequel

By RAFAEL SABATINI

THE uneasiness that had been with Monsieur de Putanges ever since the king had visited the wounded Admiral de Coligny reached a climax that night upon finding his way barred by armed men at the Porte St. Denis and a password demanded of him.

Perforce he must turn his horse about and, with his groom at his heels, ride back by the way that he had come. The vexation that at another time he might have felt at this unwarranted interference with his movements was now submerged entirely in misgivings. He was one of the host of Huguenot gentlemen attracted to Paris by the nuptials of the King of Navarre and the sister of the King of France—a marriage that the pacifists of both parties had hoped would heal the feud between the Catholic and Protestant factions, until the Guisard attempt upon the life of Coligny, the great Huguenot leader, came rudely to dash that hope.

M. de Putanges had been one of that flock of Huguenot gentlemen who had that day thronged the wounded admiral's antechamber, when the epileptic king and the sleepy-eyed queen-mother came to pay their visit of sympathy. He had listened with misgivings to the braggart threats of his co-religionists; with increased misgivings he had observed the open hostility of their bearing toward Catherine de Medici and her sons.

Already the Hôtel de Guise was in a state of fortification, filled with armed men ripe for any mischief, whilst others of the Guisard faction were abroad exciting public feeling with fantastic stories of the Huguenot peril, stories which gathered colour from the turbulent, thrasonical bearing of these Huguenots, enraged by the attempt upon their leader's life.

And now, finding the gates of Paris barred for no apparent reason, it seemed to M. de Putanges that the danger he had been apprehending was close upon them, though in what form he could not yet discern. It was therefore as well that he should be forced to postpone his journey into the country, however necessary, so that he might remain to watch over his wife.

Now this was a consideration in which M. de Putanges discovered a certain humour. He was a thoughtful gentleman with a lively sense of irony, and it amused him after a certain bitter fashion to observe his own mechanical obedience to his sense of duty toward the cold, arrogant, discontented lady who bore his name.

You know, of course, of the beautiful Madame de Putanges and of the profound impression which her beauty and wit had made upon the Court of France when taken there by her husband at the time of these nuptials of the King of Navarre. It is even rumoured—and not at all difficult to believe—that amongst those who prostrated themselves in worship before her was the very bridegroom Henri himself.

But at least the lady was virtuous—her one saving grace in her husband's eyes—and of a mind that was not to be discomposed by the flattery of even a royal wooing; it is oddly humorous that the only quality M. de Putanges could find to commend in her was that same cool aloofness which so embittered him. It was a paradox upon which he came to comment to his friend and cousin, Stanislas de la Vauvraye—

"I curse her for the very quality that makes my honour safe; because this quality that in another woman would be virtue is almost a vice in her."

And Stanislas, the gay trifler, merely laughed:

"Be content, Gaspard, with a blessing denied most husbands."

Yet, however little M. de Putanges might count himself blessed, he was fully conscious of a husband's duty, and his first thought now that he scented trouble here in Paris was for his wife.

He made his way to the Veau qui Tête, where his horses were stabled, and, having dismounted there, set out for the small house he temporarily occupied close by, in the Rue Bellerose. The summer night had closed down by then, but there was a fair moon that rendered the use of *flambeaux* unnecessary. As he stepped out into the street, he came upon a man bent double under a load of pikes. It was an odd sight, and M. de Putanges stood arrested by it; then he fell into step beside the fellow.

"Whither are you carrying that arsenal?" he demanded.

The perspiring hind looked up from under his sinister load to answer this brisk, authoritative questioner.

"It is for the entertainment at the Louvre, monsieur."

As a gentleman in the train of the King of Navarre, M. de Putanges was bidden to all Court functions. Yet here was one of which he had not so much as heard. What entertainment, then, was this that was being kept so secret and in which pikes were to be employed?

With ever-mounting uneasiness M. de Putanges lengthened his stride for home. But at the corner, where the Rue Bellerose cuts across the more important Rue St. Antoine, he ran into a group of men on the threshold of an imposing house that was all in darkness. At a glance he perceived that all were armed beyond the habit of peaceful citizens.

Headpiece and corselet glinted vividly in the moonlight, and as he approached he caught from one, on a note of sinister laughter, the word "*parpaillots*"—the nickname bestowed on members of the Huguenot party.

That was enough for M. de Putanges. Boldly—he was a man who never lacked for boldness—he mingled with the quickly swelling throng, pushed forward to the threshold and, attaching himself to a little knot of gentlemen in the act of entering, he went in with them and up abroad, scantily lighted staircase.

At the stair-head the foremost of the company knocked upon a double door. One of its leaves was half-opened and there, ensued between someone within and each of those who sought admittance a preliminary exchange of confused murmurs. M. de Putanges pushed nearer, straining his ears, and at last from one, whose mutter was louder than the others, he caught the words:

"France and the faith."

A moment later he was giving the same countersign himself.

Thus he won through into a spacious chamber that was tolerably lighted by four great *girandoles* and already thronged by an ever-increasing multitude made up of men from every walk of life. All were armed and all were excited. From what he observed, from what was said to him even—for there was none there to recognize this gentleman of Béarn, or to suppose him other than one of themselves—he quickly came to understand that the thing preparing was no less than a massacre of the Huguenots in Paris.

¶

ANON, when the room was filled almost to the extent of its capacity, and the doors were closed, a preaching friar in the black and white habit of St. Dominic, mounted a table and delivered thence at length what might be called a "sermon of the faith," a fiery denunciation of heresy.

"Hack it down, branch by branch; tear it up by the roots; rid the land of this pestilential growth, this upas-tree that poisons the very air we breathe. About it, my children! Be stern and diligent and unsparing in this holy work!"

With these terrible words of incitement ringing in his ears M. de Putanges quitted, at last, that chamber, with its physically and morally mephitic atmosphere. He was borne out upon a brawling, seething human torrent into the clean air of early dawn. Outside, that human mass broke into packs, which turned away this way and that to the cry—fierce and menacing as the baying of hounds hot upon the scent—of "*Parpaillots! Parpaillots!* Kill! Kill!"

Forearmed at least by knowledge of what to expect, M. de Putanges plunged down the Rue Bellerose toward home. In a measure, as the sounds of his late companions receded from him, ahead of him grew an ominous rumble, coming from the quays and the neighbourhood of the river; and then a crackling volley of musketry rang out abruptly from the direction of the Louvre.

M. de Putanges became suddenly aware that the Rue Bellerose was astir with flitting shadows. He came upon a man setting a mark in chalk upon a door, and, peering, beheld another similarly engaged on the opposite side of the street. He understood

the meaning of it and doubted if he would be alive by morning, and considered, almost dispassionately—for he was a dispassionate man despite his Southern blood—that it but remained him to seek his wife and await his fate beside her. If they had never known how to conduct their joint life, at least, he hoped, they would know how to die becomingly together.

In this frame of mind he reached his own threshold to find one of the doorposts bearing the chalk sign that marked the inmates down for slaughter.

With his sleeve he rubbed out the sign of doom. So much, at least, he could do in self-defence. And then he stood arrested, with pulses faintly quickening. Within the shadows of the deep porch something stirred, and at the same moment upon the deep-set inner door fell a triple knock three times repeated.

¶

M. DE PUTANGES stepped forward. Instantly the thing within the porch swung about and sprang to meet him, taking definite shape. It was a tall, cowled figure in the white habit and black scapulary of a Brother of St. Dominic. So, then, the hounds of the faith were already on the trail.

He felt his heart tightening at the thought —shrinking with icy dread for the cold termagant he loved. And then, to increase his fears, the friar pronounced his name, and so proclaimed that he was not there by chance nor attracted by the mark of doom upon the doorpost, but with sure knowledge of the inmates of the house.

"Monsieur de Putanges——" the man exclaimed, and got no farther, for utterance and breath were abruptly choked by the iron fingers that locked themselves about his throat.

He writhed and struggled, clawing fiercely at those hands that were crushing out his life, and tearing them with his nails. But, tear as he might, those hands would not relax their deadly grip. Soon his struggles weakened; soon they became mere feeble twitching. His body sagged together like an empty sack. He went down in a heap, dragging his aggressor with him, and he lay still at last.

M. de Putanges stood over the fallen friar, breathing hard; the beads of sweat upon his brow resulted partly from the exertion, partly from horror of himself that he could have done this thing in such a cold, relentless fashion. Mastering himself at last, he went forward towards the door. To his surprise he found it open, and remembered then that the friar had knocked upon it a moment ago. The latch was worked by a cord from the floor above and must have been so worked in answer to that knock.

M. de Putanges paused in the act of entering. It was not well—particularly considering that his house was marked—to leave that thing in the porch where it might be discovered. He went back and taking the limp body by the arms, he dragged it across the threshold beyond the door. And then the instinct of self-preservation that had guided him so far urged yet another step upon him. In that *papegot* livery he might yet find safety for himself and his wife from the perils that were so obviously closing round them.

The faintly reflected radiance of the moon afforded sufficient light for the simple task. In a moment he had unknotted the man's girdle and relieved him of habit and scapulary. Over his own clothes he donned the Dominican's loose white habit and drew the cowl over his head. Then he closed the door and set foot upon the narrow stairs, even as from the street outside a sudden shrieking of women was silenced by a brisk fusillade.

Overhead a light faintly gleamed; looking up he beheld, in the feeble aureole of a candle she was holding, the face of Madame de Putanges. She was peering down, seeking with her glance to pierce the darkness of that staircase. He must speak to her at once, lest the sight of his monkish figure should alarm her. But even as he parted his lips to do so her silvery voice, strained now on an anxious note, forestalled him.

"How late you are, Stanislas!" she said.

In the gloom of the staircase Gaspard de Putanges stood petrified, whilst through his brain, which seemed of a sudden half-benumbed, that welcome meant for another than himself echoed and re-echoed.

Then our gentleman's wits resumed their wonted agility, sharpened now perhaps beyond their usual keenness. Who could be this Stanislas she was expecting and for whom she mistook him, unless it were his dear friend and cousin, that gay trifler and libertine, Stanislas de la Vauvraye? Had he thus, by chance, stumbled upon the explanation of her cold aloofness toward himself? Was Stanislas the Judas who simulated

friendship that he might the more conveniently betray? In a flash a score of trifling incidents were suddenly remembered and connected to flood the mind of M. de Putanges with the light of a full revelation.

"Stanislas! Why don't you answer?" rang the impatient voice he knew so well.

Whence this absolute assurance of hers that he was the man she expected? He bethought him of that curious triple knock thrice repeated with which the friar had sought admittance and in response to which the door-latch had been so promptly lifted from above. It was a signal, of course. But then, the friar——?

On a sudden suspicion amounting almost to certainty M. de Putanges stepped back.

"Stanislas!" came again Madame de Putanges's call.

"A moment," he answered, to quiet her. "I am coming."

He ran his fingers swiftly over the face and head of the man he had choked. Here was no tonsure, no shaven cheeks. The hair of the head was full and crisp; *moustachios* bristled on the lip and a little peaked beard sprouted from the chin. There was a jewel in the left ear, which, like the rest, was as it should be with Stanislas de la Vauvraye.

The matter was beyond doubt. There remained the mystery of how Stanislas should have come to be muffled in that monkish robe. That mystery could wait. It mattered little in comparison with all the rest.

In his cursory examination of the body M. de Putanges had ascertained that the man still lived. It was perhaps as well.

He locked the street door and pocketed the key, then mounted the stair with a step that was as firm and steady as his purpose.

When he came at last within the circle of the light of the waiting woman's candle, she started back aghast.

"Why, what is this? Who are you, sir?"

Then, remembering the covenanted knock to which she had opened, she partly explained the monkish travesty.

"Why do you come thus, Stanislas?"

"That," answered M. de Putanges, in a calm, even tone, "we may presently ask of Stanislas himself."

She staggered at the sound of her husband's voice, and a deathly pallor overspread her face. Her dark eyes opened wide in terror; her lips parted, but instead of speech they uttered a mere inarticulate sound of fear and horror, almost piteous to hear. Then she recovered, as he flung back his cowl and smiled upon her, grim, sardonic and white-faced.

He observed that she was dressed for travelling, cloaked and hatted, and that a valise stood beside her at the stair-head.

"I thought you were gone to Poldarnes," she said stupidly, a mere uncontrolled utterance of her mind.

"I am sorry, madame, to discompose you by so inopportune a return," he apologized. "Circumstances compelled it, as I will presently explain."

Then at last the termagant in her recovered the sway momentarily extinguished by surprise.

"It needs no explanation, sir," she answered, with angry scorn and angry unreason. "You returned to spy upon me."

"Oh fie, madame! To accuse me of that! But how unjust, how foolishly unjust. Had you but honoured me with your confidence and informed me of your intention to elope with my dear friend and kinsman, I should have left you a clear field. I am too fond of you both to attempt against you so cruel a frustration of your designs."

"You mean that you would have been glad to be rid of me," was her fierce reproach, for even in such a situation she must be assuming the grievance to herself.

"Not glad, perhaps, but fortunate, madame," said he. "Once the pain and humiliation of it were overcome, I might have seen in my dear kinsman Stanislas my best of friends."

She fastened swiftly upon that admission.

"That is why I am leaving you," she said.

"But, of course. Do I not understand? I have, madame, a more sympathetic understanding than you have ever done me the justice to perceive."

Her answer was an inarticulate expression of contempt.

"I shall hope to prove it to you to-night, madame," he insisted. "You may come to account it as fortunate for yourself as it is unfortunate for me that I returned. If you will be so good as to step into the *salon*, I will fetch my dear cousin Stanislas."

"You will fetch him!" she gasped, in fresh alarm. "Where—where is he?"

"He is below."

She glared at him suspiciously, fierce as a tigress now.

"What have you done to him?"

"Oh," he reassured, "no permanent injury. He is a little—breathless. But that will pass."

"Let me go to him."

He barred her way.

"It is not necessary. He shall come to you. In no case can you depart just now. The streets are not safe. Listen!"

Vague, hideous sounds penetrated the silence in which they stood a moment, and froze her with sudden dread.

"They are massacring the Huguenots in Paris to-night. It was that knowledge brought me back, never dreaming that you would have so valiant a protector as the dear Stanislas so near at hand."

That made her stare at him with fresh amazement. He took advantage of it.

"If you will forgive the impertinence of the question," said this sardonic gentleman, "how long has M. de la Vauvraye been your lover, madame?"

She flushed to her eyes.

"Why must you insult me?"

"You are susceptible, then, to insult?" quoth he, as if surprised.

Her anger, goaded by his cold mockery, raced on.

"Should I have stayed a single moment under your roof after taking a lover?" she demanded passionately.

"I see," said M. de Putanges, and sighed. "You possess a casuist's mind, madame. You swallow camels yet strain at gnats."

"Maybe. But I am honourable, monsieur."

"After your own fashion, madame, strictly after your own fashion."

"I am. Having taken my resolve, I am leaving your house to-night. I am going away with M. de la Vauvraye."

She was defiant. He bowed to her will.

"Why, so you shall, for me. Be so good as to wait in the *salon* whilst I fetch this dear Stanislas."

He took the candle from her limp hand and went down the stairs again. He found his kinsman sitting up in bewilderment—a bewilderment which the sight of M. de Putanges transmuted into stark fear.

"Be good enough to step up to the *salon* with me, my dear cousin," said M. de Putanges amiably. "My wife desires a word with you, whereafter you may carry out or not your fond intentions. That will depend."

And M. de la Vauvraye, his mind benumbed by this extraordinary turn of what should have been so simple and delightful an adventure, followed his kinsman up the stairs with an obedience of such utter helplessness as to be almost entirely mechanical.

In the *salon* they found madame awaiting them. She stood by the heavy, carved table of dark oak, well in the light of the dozen tapers that burned in a gilded candle-branch. Her beautiful face was pale and haggard, yet neither so pale nor so haggard as that of the lover she now confronted in circumstances so vastly different from all that she had expected of this night.

Of the three, the only one at ease—outwardly, at least—was M. de Putanges. Tall, erect, virilely handsome, a man in the very flower of his age, bronzed, intrepid and aquiline of countenance, he made the golden-headed trifler, la Vauvraye, seem so sickly and effeminate by contrast that it was difficult to discern how any woman could have come to prefer him.

"Be seated, my dear Stanislas, and you, madame. I shall not keep you long."

M. de Putanges was suavity itself.

¶

LA VAUVRAYE, under the eyes of madame, realizing that he was in danger of cutting a poor, unheroic figure, summoned impudence to his aid, affected nonchalance.

"You relieve my fears, monsieur," said he, as, with a shrug and a half-laugh, he sank to an armchair. He was not as successful as he thought, for his crumpled ruff and dishevelled hair lent him an appearance which dignity but made the more ridiculous.

"Your fears?" quoth M. de Putanges.

"Of being worried by an endless discourse. Weariness is the one thing in life I dread."

"You are in no danger of it, dear cousin. Indeed, the night should promise a surfeit of excitement even to such a glutton for high adventure."

La Vauvraye stifled a yawn.

"If you will but explain," he begged, on a half-plaintive note.

"Of course. But first a question: How came you by this Dominican frock in which I found you?"

"Oh, that!"

M. de la Vauvraye was very casual.

"You will know by now what is afoot to-night in Paris. I, too, discovered it as I was coming here. At the end of the Rue Bellerose I came upon a shaveling I knew

—one Friar Antoine Gerbier whom I had met once or twice at Court. Unfortunately for him he knew me, too, and calling me by name, threatened to denounce me for an heretic. I had a dagger. Needs more be said? I silenced that too garrulous friar and left him in a doorway."

"Possessing yourself of his habit?"

"Why, yes. I realized that on such a night his scapulary would possess the virtues that are claimed for scapularies, would be a panoply against all perils. You would seem to have been of the same mind yourself when, taking me unawares, you became possessed of it and donned it in your turn."

"And then, dear cousin? Continue, pray."

"What more is there to tell?"

"Why, that you counted upon the frock to shield not only yourself but this Huguenot lady with whom you had planned an elopement for to-night."

"Oh, that, of course."

The nonchalance was almost overdone.

"It was my notion, too. Since we are both agreed as to its excellence, there is no reason why it should not be acted upon."

The affected languor passed from M. de la Vauvraye's eyes. They became alert and keen to the point almost of anxiety. M. de Putanges proceeded to explain himself.

"Madame de Putanges must be saved," he said quietly. "That is the paramount consideration. She must be carried out of reach of this bloodthirsty intolerance before it is too late. Escorted by a brother of St. Dominic, the thing is easy. We have but to determine which of us shall don the frock and take her hence, which shall remain behind to die nobly for her sake.

"Since we both love her, the decision should be easy, for neither of us should hesitate to remain. Rather do I fear a noble emulation as to which shall go."

He dealt so delicately in irony that neither of his listeners could be certain that he was ironical, though both suspected it.

With blanched cheeks and bulging eyes M. de la Vauvraye stared at his cousin, waiting. The handsome woman seated in the high-backed chair looked on with parted lips, her breathing quickened, and waited too.

"But for what is taking place in Paris to-night, my dear cousin, it might be necessary to choose some other way of resolving this painful situation. As it is, our common love for Madame de Putanges makes the way clear. One of us goes. One stays behind to die."

He paused and the silence within that room was tense and heavy. Outside was uproar—the baying of the fanatical mob, the crackling of shivered timbers and the screams of the luckless heretic victims.

M. de la Vauvraye moistened his parched lips with his tongue.

"And how—how is that to be determined?" he asked in a quavering high-pitched voice that cracked on the last word.

"What way could gallantry conceive but one? It is Madame de Putanges who must choose."

And he bowed deferentially before her as he consigned into her hands that monstrous decision.

M. de la Vauvraye expressed in a gasp his immense relief, never doubting how madame would choose, never observing the stark horror that overspread her lovely face or how that horror deepened at the sound he made. But M. de Putanges had yet more to say.

"Thus, madame, you shall have at last the choice that should have been yours at first. It is in your power to-night to repair the injustice that was done you three years ago when, unconsulted, you were driven into a wedlock of arrangement."

He sighed.

"Perhaps, had I wooed you first and wed you afterwards, all might have been well with us. I realize to-night the profound mistake of reversing that natural course of things and I desire, belatedly, to correct it by giving you now, late though it be, the choice that is a woman's right. So pronounce, madame. Determine of your own free will which of us shall assume the frock and bear you hence; which shall remain to die."

¶

ON that he ended, looking with solemn inscrutable glance deep into the eyes that stared at him out of his wife's white, horror-stricken face. He knew that—unless he knew nothing of human nature—the woman did not live who could take upon her conscience the responsibility of such a choice, and upon that knowledge he was boldly trading. And to help him to his deep ends came the bleating voice of his foolish rival on an urgent note of obvious meaning that he dared not more plainly utter:

"Henriette! Henriette!"

M. de Putanges observed her shrink and cringe before that appeal, as if conscious only of the meanness and cowardice that inspired it. Upon something of that kind, too, had he counted. He intended to compel her to-night to look, as she had never yet troubled to look, into his soul. And he intended no less to lay bare the little soul of the man for whom she would have left him.

"Well, madame?" he challenged her again, and as he spoke he loosened the girdle of his monkish habit, as if to stress his readiness for renunciation at her bidding. "Which of us shall wear the frock, the scapulary of salvation—more potently protecting to-night than any consecrated prophylactic?"

And again from M. de la Vauvraye—now half-risen—came the appeal:

"Henriette!"

Madame de Putanges looked with the glance of a hunted creature from one to the other of those men. Then a shudder ran through her. She twisted and untwisted the fingers of her interlocked hands.

"I cannot! I cannot!" she cried out at last. "No—no. I cannot have the blood of either of you on my soul."

"Yet consider, madame, that unless you choose we are likely all of us to perish here together," her husband urged her.

"I can't! I can't! I will not choose. It is monstrous to demand it of me," she cried.

"Demand?" echoed M. de Putanges. "Oh, madame, I do not demand; I invite. But since you are so tender in this matter, we must determine it by other means; and that I deplore, because no other means could assure your future happiness as your own free choice must do. Still——"

He broke off and flung the Dominican frock and scapulary, of which he had now divested himself, upon the table; then he turned to a tall press that stood against the wall, and took from one of its drawers a dice-box. Rattling the cubes in their leathern container, he looked across at his kinsman.

"Come, cousin. You love a hazard. Here is one in which the stakes are something rare. Love and life are here for one of us."

M. de la Vauvraye, who had risen, shrank back in fear.

"No, no," he cried, putting out his hands in a violent gesture of denial.

"What else remains?" quoth M. de Putanges. "Courage, my man. I'll lead the way."

And he threw recklessly as he spoke, thereby committing the other to the adventure.

The three cubes scattered wide and rattled to a standstill on the polished oaken board. Madame's glittering eyes followed them and remained expressionless when the throw was revealed—two aces and a deuce.

M. de Putanges uttered a soft laugh.

"I have no luck," said he. "You should have known that I was not to be feared, Stanislas. You'll scarce hesitate to throw after me."

Yet he was pleased enough in the heart of him. Fortune could not have served him better. M. de la Vauvraye would be eager now that no risk remained, and so would make yet further self-revelation. And eager he was. He laughed as he gathered up the dice with trembling fingers: a hectic flush tinged now his cheek-bones as he threw—two fives and a four.

"Victory!" he cried, and snatched up the frock in exultation.

M. de Putanges bowed with quiet dignity.

"I congratulate you, cousin, and you, madame, since surely Fortune must have determined as you would have wished, yet dared not pronounce out of a generous thought for me. For that thought I thank you. What yet remains will be the easier for me in the knowledge that it comes not from you but from fortune. You had best make haste away."

"Indeed, indeed—he is right," M. de la Vauvraye now urged her, as he shook out the folds of the frock and with trembling fingers knotted the girdle about his middle.

But madame made no answer to either of them. With eyes of wonder she looked from one to the other, contrasting the noble calm in adversity of this husband she had never known with the craven, meanly selfish eagerness of the shallow courtier whom she had imagined that she loved.

"Come, Henriette——" M. de la Vauvraye was beginning, when suddenly she laughed so oddly that he checked. She looked at him with shining, oddly smiling eyes.

"Do not wait for me, monsieur. All that it was yours to stake upon the throw was the scapulary that will shield your life. You have won that and so you may win to safety. But I do not go with the scapulary. Good night, M. de la Vauvraye."

He stared at her, chapfallen, dumb-

founded, stricken in his scanty wits and in his monstrous vanity.

"What?" he cried. "You will remain?"

"With my husband, if you please, monsieur."

Quiet and self-contained in the background beyond the table M. de Putanges looked on and wondered. M. de la Vauvraye rapped out an oath. Then anger bubbled to the surface of his shallow nature.

"Good night, madame," he bade her viciously and turned on his heel.

As he reached the door her voice arrested him.

"M. de la Vauvraye!"

He turned again.

"A man in your place would have acted, perhaps, more generously. A man would have remembered all that is involved. A man would account that my final decision overrides the decision of the dice. He would have proffered the scapulary to the true winner.

"A man would have done that. But you, it seems, are something less. I desired to test it. Having tested it, I am the more content to stay."

He looked at her from the depths of the cowl which he had already pulled over his head, so that his face was no longer visible. Without answering her he went out and closed the door violently after him. They heard his steps go pattering down the stairs, until the sound of them was drowned in the uproar from without.

Then they looked at each other across the table.

"Did I conceive him worthy of you I should not have suffered you to have had your way, madame. Even now I doubt——"

"Gaspard," she interrupted him, "am content. I have chosen, even though I have chosen too late."

She held out her hands to him and he saw that she was weeping. He took those hands and very tenderly he stooped to kiss them.

"My dear," he said, "it but remains for us to forgive each other."

As he spoke the air was shaken by a sudden roar, deeper, fiercer, nearer than any that had gone before. She sank against him, shuddering in sudden fear.

"What is that?" she panted.

"Wait," he said. Swiftly he quenched the lights. Then in the darkness he groped to the shutters, opened them and flung the window wide. Screened by the gloom above, they looked down into the seething furious mob revealed by torchlight.

In the clutches of a knot of frenzied men a Dominican friar was struggling madly.

"Let us look at your face," they were howling. "Let us make sure that you are what you seem—that you are not the villain who murdered Father Gerbier and stole his frock."

The cowl was suddenly torn back and the terror-stricken face of Stanislas de la Vauvraye was revealed.

"We have found you at last, you murdering heretic!" cried a voice, and a pike was swung up above the Huguenot's luckless head.

A roar arose:

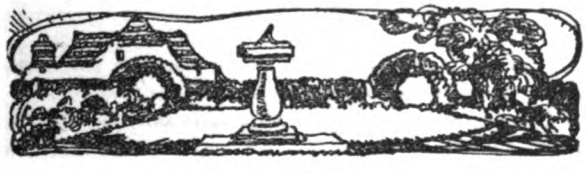
"Kill! Kill! Death to the Huguenot!"

M. de Putanges pulled his wife back and closed the window and the shutters. She clung to him in the dark.

"What we have escaped!" she moaned. "Had he been generous, had I been mad——"

She said no more; she fell on her knees to pray.

All night they waited hand in hand for Death. It was, they said thereafter, their true nuptial night. But death did not seek them. M. de Putanges, you will remember, had rubbed the sign of doom from the doorpost with his sleeve and the house was not molested. Three days later, when the reaction had set in, they quietly slipped out of Paris, unchallenged, and made their way back to Béarn and happiness.



Mr. Punch's Library of Golf

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MISS SYBIL THORNDIKE says that "all the people who have done great things in this life have been alone." Especially on a golf-course.

HEART-BROKEN COMPETITOR (who has missed a quick putt): "Now wouldn't you call that provoking?" Caddie: "Well, miss, that's a word I don't use meself."

A GOLF-BALL which squeaks when lost has been invented by a Yorkshire golfer. To meet this menace to one of their chief sources of income, caddies have taken to wearing new boots.

LADY (who has overrun the hole badly): "Heavens! what did I do then?" Caddie (helpfully): "You 'it it too 'ard."

CADDIE (to Curate): "High tee, sir?" Curate: "No; put it on the ground. I give up sand during Lent."

SENSITIVE GOLFER (who has foozled): "Did you laugh at me, boy?" Caddie: "No, sir, I was laughin' at anither man." Sensitive Golfer: "And what's funny about him?" Caddie: "He plays golf awfu' like you, sir!"

PLAYER (to caddie in trousers many sizes too large for him): "And what's your name?" Caddie: "They call me 'Breeks,' but ma maiden name is Christy."

MACSYMON: "I saw you were carrying for the Professor yesterday, Sandy. How does he play?" Sandy: "Eh, yon man'll never be a gowffer. Dive ye ken what he says when he foozles a ba'?" MacSymon: "No. What does he say?" Sandy: "*Tut-tut!*"

TENNIS-PLAYER (from London, and watching his first golf-match): "Don't see the fun o' this game—knocking a ball into a bush and then 'untin' about for it."

MISS DORA (to gentleman who is playing an important match and who has just lost his ball): "Oh, do come and take your horrid ball away from my little dog. He won't let me touch it, and I know he must be ruining his teeth."

¶

SCOTS CADDIE-MASTER (to Member): "Weel, and hoo did ye get on this mornin'?" Member: "Oh, splendid up to the greens, then I found I couldn't putt." Scots Caddie-Master: "Ay, ay, I ken—juist guid useless gowf."

MAJOR BRUMMEL (comparing the length of his and his opponent's drives): "I think I'm shorter than Mr. Simkins?" Small caddie (a new hand): "Yes, sir, and fatter too, sir!"

AUNT JABISCA (pointing to earnest golfer endeavouring to play out of a quarry): "Dear me, Maud, what a respectably-dressed man that is breaking stones!"

MEDIOCRE GOLFER (to local caddie, after his opponent has made a miraculous drive): "Good heavens! Does he always play like that?" Caddie: "Naw, it's all right, mister; 'is foot must 'ave slipped."

SPORTSMAN (in furnishing emporium): "I'd like to see some rugs, if you please." Salesman: "Yes, sir, if you would give me an idea of the size, colour and material——" Sportsman: "Oh, all I want is a thick pile with tufts on the top. You see, I'm rather rotten with my brassie."

CADDIE (visiting): "What kind o' player is he?" The Other Caddie: "'Im? He just plays as if it was for pleasure!"

THE GENERAL (waiting to drive, to girl carrying baby who blocks the way): "Now then, hurry on, please, with that baby." Girl: "Garn! Baby yerself, playing at ball there in your knickerbockers an' all."

MCFOOZLER (after a steady sequence of misses): "Ah—er—is there a *limit* for these links?"

POLICEMAN (to suspicious-looking character carrying golf-bag): "Where did you get that bag?" Bill Sikes (indignantly): "There you are! Nice thing, in a free country, that a man can't have a quiet hundred up without the police interfering."

SHORT-SIGHTED OLD LADY (to little Binks, armed with golf-bag and on his way to the links): "How much will you charge me to mend this umbrella?"

NOVICE (steadily approaching the hole): "*Something* must be wrong. That's the third time running I've used this club."

¶

GOLFER (not much good, hailing friend who is playing to another hole): "Seen a ball lying about? I've lost mine." The Other: "Yes, I did see one, but it can't be yours, old man. It was on the fairway."

MISS ARMSTRONG (who has foozled six times with various clubs): "And which o' the sticks am I to use now?" Weary Caddie: "Give it a knock wi' the bag."

FIRST GOLFER (to Second Golfer, who is caught in a bunker): "Well, Jones told me this morning that he did this hole yesterday in four." Second Golfer (who stammers): "If Jones s-s-said he did it in four he was a l-l-l——" First Golfer: "Steady, friend, steady!" Second Golfer: "—he was a l-l-lucky beggar!"

GOLF ENTHUSIAST (who has lunched heartily, and is following an important professional match): "Shnot fair. Why, that poor chap is shtymied on the tee."

CADDIE (pointing to direction flag for the benefit of curate who is playing his first game of golf): "You'd better play right on the flag, sir." Curate: "Thank you very much. But I have very grave doubts as to my ability to hit such a very small mark at this distance."

MR. SPOONER (a beginner, during the course of a friendly round): "This is my ball, I think." Colonel Bunting (an adept): "By jove, that's a jolly good lie!" Mr. Spooner: "Really, Bunting, we're very old friends, of course, but I do think you might find a pleasanter way of pointing out a perfectly unintentional mistake."

SANGUINE but short-sighted golfer after he has driven: "Is that on the 'carpet,' caddie?" Caddie (as ball swerves into cottage window): "Yus, sir; front parlour, sir."

IRASCIBLE MALE (audibly): "This club is going to ruin—allowing these ladies to join!" Miss Sharp: "They evidently can't get gentlemen!"

¶

TOMMY: "I say, do you know who's winning?" Ethel: "I think uncle must be. I heard him offer to carry auntie's clubs."

SCENE—Country Police Court.—Magistrate: "My boy, do you fully realize the nature of an oath?" Boy: "Well, I oughter, considerin' the times I've caddied for yer!"

FIRST CADDIE (to colleague): "'Ere, Bert, wot's that bloke of yours like ter caddie for? 'E seems an orful fierce sort of cove the way 'e 'acks the links about." Second Caddie: "'E's a fine chap, 'e is. I likes goin' round with 'im. By the time yer gets back 'ome there ain't nothin' left ter carry but the bag."

FIRST ENTHUSIAST: "I say, will you play another round with me on Thursday?" Second Enthusiast: "Well, I'm booked to be married on that day, *but it can be postponed!*"

GOLF STARTER (on Scottish public course): "What's yer name?" Foreign Gentleman (with dignity): "Henri Jean de St. Pierre Montvilliers." Golf Starter: "Hoots, man, ye canna play gowf wi' a name like that. You'll juist start at ten-thirty with the name of Macintosh."

MIGGS and GRIGGS, who have got away for a week-end holiday, have strayed on to the golf-links, and have been watching the Colonel, who has been bunkered for the last ten minutes. Incidentally they have overheard the Colonel's language. Miggs: "What's he doin'?" Griggs: "I dunno. Think he's trying to kill something."

BEGINNER (at the end of wretched round): "By Jove! I believe I know why I can't play this game. Perhaps it is because I stand too close to the ball when I'm driving." Expert Friend (wearily): "Perhaps, but I rather think that the trouble with you is that you stand too close to the ball *after you've driven.*"

CHEERFUL DUFFER (determinedly): "I don't care, I'm jolly well going to stay here until I get the ball into the hole." Caddie: "Well, you'll have ter get another boy, sir; this is my barf night."

BEGINNER (after purchasing golfing outfit): "Now, there's just one other little point. How—er—many flags ought one to buy?"

MR. MEENISTER MACGLUCKY (of the Free Kirk, after having given way more than usual to an expression somewhat strong—despairingly): "Oh! Aye! Ah, well. I'll have to give it up?" Mr. Elder McNab: "Wha-at, man, give up gowf?" Mr. Meenister MacGlucky: "Nae, man, give up the meenistry."

¶

FARMER (communing dismally with friend): "Always grumbling, are we? Well, supposing your pigs were down wi' th' fever, and your sheep had got th' influenza, and your crops were drowned in eighteen inches of water, and your rent were overdue—what would you do?" The Friend: "I'd give it up and start a golf-club."

PROFESSIONAL GOLFER (answering anxious question): "Well, no, sir. At your time o' life you can never hope to become a player, but if you practise hard for three years you'll be able to tell good play from bad when you see it."

VISITOR to Scottish golfing resort: "Well, my boy, do you remember me when I was here last summer? I had some wonderful rounds with McPherson, the professional." Caddie: "Ah weel, sir, you could beat McPherson now." Visitor (swelling visibly): "Do you think I've improved so much, then?" Caddie: "Naw, but McPherson's deed."

OLD HAND: "Ah, I heard you'd joined. Been round the links yet?" New Hand: "Oh yes. Went yesterday." Old Hand: "What did you go round in?" New Hand: "Oh, my ordinary clothes."

LADY (who has watched young male friend playing some wretched strokes): "Aren't you a little off your game this morning, Mr. Smythe?" Mr. Smythe: "Oh, I'm not playing this morning, Miss Bertha. Only just amusing myself."

LADEN AND PERSPIRING STRANGER: "Could you kindly tell me how far it is to the station?" Sportsome Native: "About a full drive, two brassies and a putt."

LICENSED CADDIE: "Carry your clubs, sir?" Jones (who has chartered very small boy at a cheap rate): "No, I've got a caddie." Licensed Caddie: "Carry your caddie, sir?"

HOPELESS DUFFER (who continually asks his caddie the same question, with much grumbling at the non-success of his clubs): "And what shall I take now?" His Unfortunate Partner (whose match has been lost and game spoiled, at last breaking out): "What'll you tak' noo? The best thing ye can tak' is the fower-fifteen for Edinburgh."

Freddy's Ship

A big deception and a bigger moment

By MARY E. MANN

"A DAY or two, and I must return these people's call," Mrs. Macmichel said to herself as she passed the Rectory gate. "What a bore!"

Two or three days ago the rector and his wife, calling on their new parishioner at the Court, had found her just returned from lunch with the shooting party in the field.

"Bad luck, wasn't it?" she asked, later, of the half-dozen men to whom she was giving tea in the billiards-room. "If I'd stayed to watch you shoot for another five minutes, I should have escaped them! Not a bad, dowdy little woman—the man a worse stick in the drawing-room than the pulpit, if possible. Subjects; his—parish room he wants to build; hers—son at sea, or going to sea, or has been to sea, or something. What is it to me? If he is drowned fifty fathoms deep at the bottom of the sea, do I care?"

"Now, if I only have the good luck to pick on a day when they're out!" she said, as she stepped briskly along, a tall, and handsome, and fashionable-looking woman, in her hat with the green twisted veil and the green cock's feathers, her short, workmanlike skirt and belted coat.

Down the short path from the Rectory door to the gate the rector himself was coming. Mrs. Macmichel bowed a condescending head as she passed on, receiving no form of salutation, but a stare from a pair of vacant eyes in return.

"Well, really! Such people!" the lady said to herself as she walked disdainfully on. "Even here you would expect a man would know he is always expected to take off his hat when a woman bows to him!"

"Mrs. Macmichel!" a voice said at her back. A hand was laid upon her arm. She turned a look of astonished questioning upon the man who had ventured to touch her.

"Stop, please," he said; his voice was breathless as of one in great agitation. "Mrs. Macmichel, I think you owe my wife a call? I want you to pay it now—at once——"

"It is very kind of you. I——"

"You mustn't make excuses. You mustn't deny me. You must go, and you must—stay."

The thought that he might be mad was succeeded as she looked in his face, by the thought that he must be ill. The healthy colour natural to them had left his large cheeks, their fatness was only flabbiness, the small eyes were filled with a strange, pleading, protesting misery, as of a man in terrible bodily discomfort.

"Mr. Jones, I am afraid you are not well?"

He stopped her with an impatiently thrown-up hand. "It's not that—I'm all right. It's worse—it's my son——"

"The sailor?"

"News has come that the *Doughty* has gone down. All lost."

"Your son was in that ship?"

He did not answer, but pressed his lips, which were piteously quivering, together, and looked at her in staring misery.

"I am going into the village to wire for—confirmation. Till I return you must keep with my wife."

"But, Mr. Jones! I am deeply, deeply sorry; but you must let me telegraph, and you yourself stay with Mrs. Jones."

"No. She would know as soon as she saw my face. I stole away—I dare not see her." He stayed a minute, biting at lips drawn inward over his teeth. "Our only one!" he said. "No other! When I know—when there is no hope—no hope—I must tell her. I could wish that she might die before—that we might both die."

Tears had gushed upon the flabby cheeks; he mumbled his lips for a minute, unable to speak.

"If there was anything else I could do—anything!" Mrs. Macmichel said. "But this——"

"You will watch over her till I come

back," he said, not even noticing her remonstrance. "It is a service I ask of you by right of our common humanity. Go in to her at once, please."

With his hand on her arm he turned her to the gate, and opened it for her. "Let no one else come near her," he said. "The butcher delivering our meat gave me the news. He saw it on the newspaper board at the village shop. Everyone in the village who reads it will come up at once to tell my wife. Keep them away. She has a weak heart; told suddenly, she might—— Don't let her stir out. Don't let her hold communication with anyone till I return."

He put up a trembling hand in the direction of his clerical hat, but lacked the spirit to lift it, and turned hurriedly away.

"But, Mr. Jones!" she called. She made a step or two after him. "It will be so awkward—for her, I mean. She won't understand. You see, I hardly know your wife."

He raised his strengthless hand for a few inches, and let it fall with a gesture of hopeless wretchedness. "Oh, what do such things matter?" he groaned.

She was ashamed to persist. "I thought perhaps someone in the village—someone she knew——"

"They could do nothing with her," he explained. "If she wanted them to go, she would tell them to go; she can't tell you. If she wanted to go into the village, she would go——"

"How soon will you be back?"

"An hour. Two hours. I must wire to Portsmouth, and wait a reply." He began to walk on again. "When I come back I shall—know," he said, and shuffled forward, with drooping back and legs that shook beneath him, on his way.

Once he turned, and, seeing her still at the gate, pointed a weakly imperative finger at the house without stopping in his progress.

Hardly crediting that it could be upon her, Flora Macmichel, accustomed to walk in paths so carefully smoothed, to have all ugly things hidden from her sight, that this task of matchless unpleasantness had been thrust, she turned and walked slowly towards the Rectory door. There are so many women in the world, shrieking, gesticulating, ready to rush into any fray a-brewing; so many quiet and strong and helpful, aching to take other people's burdens upon their shoulders; she had never sought to identify herself with one or the other species, holding the comfortable doctrine that we cannot all be servers, that in the general scheme those who only stand to be waited on also hold a useful place.

Why need she do this thing? Three weeks ago she had not known these people existed; three days ago had not set eyes on them. For humanity's sake, he had said. Well!

But she thought of the mumbling lips, the look of anguish in the poor eyes, went on, and rang the bell.

Mrs. Jones was in, of course. She was sitting over the dining-room fire, writing a letter. A short, rather fat, rather dumpy woman, with plain features, an ominous flush on her sallow cheeks, iron-grey hair, and very large, very luminous dark eyes.

"How very good of you to call so soon!" she said, and got up to welcome, rather effusively, the rich woman who had come to be a parishioner. "Let your master know at once that Mrs. Macmichel is here, Mabel," she said to the servant, and gave Mabel a look which indicated tea was to make its appearance with as little delay as possible. "Are you walking or driving? Walking? Really? Now, would you rather sit near the fire or the open window? It is the kind of day—isn't it?—when either is agreeable."

She had a slightly nervous manner, or she was not quite at ease with the strange caller. She altered the position of the chairs, rattled the poker in the fire, pushed away the little table which held the writing things.

"I was just writing to my son," she said, and smiled, as if sure of her interest in the subject, at the woman, who, chill to the marrow with the discomfort of her errand, had taken a chair by the side of the fire. "I think I told you he is in the Navy? He is commanding the *Doughty*, the new destroyer. Going trips in her every day or so. I suppose these destroyers are terrible looking things? Ah! I have never seen one, but I imagine so. Such a comfort to me to know they are, after all, as safe as Freddy tells me they are."

"Such a mild day for the time of year, isn't it? And such a pretty stretch of road from the Court here!"

"We often say so!"

"And just the right length for a walk!"

"Exactly a mile and a quarter."

"Really?"

"Exactly! We always called it a mile;

but the last time he was home on leave Freddy measured it with his new cyclometer. 'Now, mother,' he said, 'please to remember it's a mile and a quarter, and don't let's have any dispute about it in future.'"

"It's so nice to know—to an inch or two!"

"Well, Freddy has a very accurate mind. He can't bear anything slipshod in the way of a statement. Now, you are sure, after your walk, you do not feel the fire too much? Then move into this chair. You have really taken the least comfortable in the room. Now, isn't that better?"

Mrs. Macmichel said that it was delightfully cosy. She was inwardly shivering; the tips of her fingers felt like ice. She pulled off her loose gloves, and held a pair of white hands, blazing with jewels, to the flame. She must force herself to talk, and to keep the poor woman off the topic of her son; but she, who was considered ready-tongued and ready-witted, sat dumb; she had not a word to say.

"There is so much difference in chairs?" she said at length.

The banality did not affect Mrs. Jones to laughter, as the speaker had a fear it might have done. She seized eagerly on the remark.

"Isn't there? Some are straight in the back, and some slope too much for comfort; some are too high in the seat for short legs, and some quite ridiculously low."

"But this is perfect."

"I am so glad you find it so! It is Freddy's. It was one he bought when he was in barracks. But he sent it to me. It was much too comfortable to be anywhere but in his own home, he said. Isn't it delightful that young men are so much attached to their homes, nowadays?"

It was indeed delightful, Mrs. Macmichel answered; and added, with an effort, the original remark that home was a delightful place.

She supposed it was, the other lady agreed. "I never go away from mine, my health does not allow me," she said; "and so, perhaps, I can hardly judge."

She looked round the rather dismal, rather shabby room with a something critical in her gaze. Perhaps the presence of the fashionably dressed woman seated there—a person so evidently out of harmony with her surroundings—helped her to see the familiar dowdiness with other eyes. She gave a quick sigh as she looked, then turned to her visitor with her nervous smile:

"It is a mercy Freddy does not see the old fashion, the shabbiness. He only sees—home," she said.

Always Freddy! Poor Freddy, who would never see home again!

Searching wildly in her, at this crisis, stagnant mind for anything to turn the poor woman from her subject, Mrs. Macmichel remembered the Parish Room. Here should be a mine of conversational wealth. She would work it for all it was worth.

"My husband is so—interested in the scheme," she said, and gulped a little at the lie. "Tell me over again, please, all those details you gave me before. He would like to know how much you have in hand; what you want to complete the room; what the bazaar brought in, and how much you expect from the concert."

¶

MRS. JONES rose easily to the bait. She rose, too, taking all the time, to fetch from her writing-case the typewritten circular where the parish's need for such a room was stated, and the paper, in her husband's handwriting, on which the sums already collected, and their source, were set forth. A hundred and thirty pounds were still wanted. What was a sum like that to this millionaire at the Court? And what a lot of begging, writing, giving of jumble sales, supposing they were moved to give that sum, would be saved to the Joneses!

Mrs. Macmichel took the papers, glanced at them, laid them on her lap, tried to say yes and no in the right places to the information now eagerly poured forth to her; tried to keep her eyes from that letter which the clergyman's wife had been interrupted in writing. It had fluttered to the floor as she had looked through her writing-case, and now lay, unheeded by her, at the visitor's feet.

"My own darling boy," it began.

"Such a poor parish." "So much indifference." "So disheartening," fell on Flora Macmichel's unreceptive ear.

"My own darling boy."

Something other than curiosity, stronger than her will, glued her eyes to the page.

"Your last dear letter reached me——"

Last! Yes, last indeed!

"Only five shillings and twopence in the bag; and of that two shillings were con-

tributed by Mr. Jones and myself. Discouraging, is it not ? "

" —This subject we will discuss more fully when you come home again." In spite of herself she read the words.

Come home again ! Come home again ! When the sea gives up its dead !

The servant came in, bringing tea ; picked up the letter, returned it to the table.

" If you please, ma'am, Mrs. Pyman have called, and wish to speak with you."

" Ask her to wait," the mistress said ; then glanced at her visitor to deprecate the anticipated polite protest on her part. " Anne Pyman will like very much to sit down in the kitchen for a while," she said. But as the maid withdrew she apparently altered her mind. " This good woman is the biggest gossip in the village," she explained. " She is always running up here to tell me this or that which she picks up. I think, after all, if you would excuse me for one minute——? "

" Of course ! " the visitor said mechanically ; then awoke to the remembrance that she had undertaken to keep Mrs. Jones from all outside intercourse. She turned an anxious look upon her hostess : " I think if we could have tea—— ? " she said.

Then she strangled a laugh in her throat —a laugh, sitting in Freddy's chair ! What —what must Freddy's mother think of her !

" Oh, certainly ! " Mrs. Jones concurred. The large, dark eyes, the only handsome feature she possessed, scanned with a fleeting gaze of inquiry the other woman's face. " I dare say, after your walk——"

" If you don't mind. Yes. Quite so. Tea is so very refreshing, don't you think ? "

The temptation to say it was the cup which cheered but did not inebriate crossed her mind, but was combated.

The bread and butter handed to her with her tea was thick, the tea had not been creamed ; but if food and drink had been fit for the entertainment of the gods, she did not think she could have swallowed. She lifted the bread and butter to her lips, then laid it, untasted, down again ; she stirred her tea, and glanced at the clock upon the mantelpiece. For how long must she sit and talk inanities with this mother whose only child was lying fathoms deep beneath the sea ? She had been there barely a quarter of an hour. For an hour and three-quarters, at least, she must sit there, still, whatever the other woman thought of her, however she tried to rid herself of her company.

" You, too, have a son, I believe ? " Mrs. Jones was saying.

'" Yes." She had an only son. His name was Connell. He was six years old.

" And very dear to you, I know ! " The eyes of the woman whose only son was drowned shone with sympathy. They were speaking eyes, really beautiful with that light in them.

" Very dear to me," responded the woman in Freddy's chair. To her eyes came a sudden, unexpected rush of tears. Of her own child she felt she could not speak to this unconsciously bereaved mother.

" And six years old ? Ah ! Now I must show you what my dear boy was like at six."

She got up, and fetched from the mantelpiece a photograph of a tiny boy in a sailor's dress ; a plain-featured, ordinary-looking little boy, with dark eyes, too solemn for his age.

" Now, is your boy as big, do you think ? We considered Freddy a fine boy. And whom do you think he takes after ? "

" He is like you—about the eyes," Mrs. Macmichel said. She gave the photograph back hurriedly. She could not endure to look upon the eyes closed now upon " the first dark day of nothingness."

Mrs. Jones put the portrait tenderly in its place. " That big photograph standing above the clock was taken only the other day," she said. " When he was appointed to the *Doughty*. I wished so much to have him in his uniform. But the trouble I had to get him to have it taken ! For no inducement in the world but to please me would he appear in uniform when not on duty, he said."

And now he lay, like Nicanor, " dead in his harness."

Mrs. Macmichel was seated directly in front of the enlarged photograph. Its eyes looked straight into hers as she lifted them, with, it seemed to her, an infinite sadness.

" Is it not strange that we should both be mothers of only sons ? "

It was not, in fact, a very remarkable coincidence, but the other woman conceded that it was strange.

" It ought to be a bond of sympathy between us."

" Yes."

Mrs. Macmichel's eyes were turned uneasily upon the door at which the servant had suddenly appeared.

"Mrs. Pyman is afraid she can't wait any longer now, ma'am. She wouldn't keep you more'n a minute if you could speak to her, she says."

Mrs. Macmichel put out a hand and gripped the arm of her hostess as she rose from her seat: "Don't——" she said imploringly. "Don't go! We are so—so comfortable."

Mrs. Jones could not but be flattered, although she could not help being surprised. "Tell Anne Pyman, I am sorry," she said to the maid, who, however, stood her ground.

"And cook say, the butcher have been, and can she speak to you for a minute, ma'am?" she asked.

The butcher! He who had brought the terrible news. In her eagerness Mrs. Macmichel turned to the servant standing at the door.

"No," she said, "certainly not! Your mistress cannot come."

The miserable, not to be repressed chuckle of laughter took her again as the girl withdrew. "You must think me strange," she said to the lady, gazing at her with astonished eyes. "But I *am* strange. We are getting on so well. I don't like to be interrupted. Go on. You were saying——?"

"About the bond of sympathy; our only children. I'm afraid the bread and butter is too substantial; will you try a bun instead?"

"It is delicious!" Flora Macmichel said, and put the slice again to her lips, and again placed it unbitten in the saucer.

"There is," said the clergyman's wife, in a lowered tone, "something awful—I mean in the sense of being full of awe—in being entrusted by God with only one child. Don't you think that much more will be required of us, and of them—our dear children?"

Mrs. Macmichel had not thought of it in that light.

"You see, we have no others to divide our devotion, to distract our attention. Our only one should be, as near as a mother can make him so, perfect."

"Wouldn't that make him a little—well—uninteresting?"

Mrs. Jones's eyes blazed reproof as she answered. "Freddy is not uninteresting," she said.

Presently her voice dropped to a hushed whisper: "Then, there is the thought"—she said—"the haunting thought—should he die—should it please God to take him from us, we lose our all. All!" she repeated; and the word, spoken in that tone of heavy solemnity, dropped like lead upon Flora Macmichel's heart.

If she lost Connell there was still, in her case, her husband; but she thought of the husband of Mrs. Jones and was silent.

"I have a friend," she said, suddenly rousing herself to make one effort suitable to the occasion, "whose only little girl died last year. They thought her heart would break, but it did not. She—in a marvellous way she bore it. Never once did she seem to me to sorrow—painfully. The child, for long and long after she was dead, seemed with her, she told me." She leant forward in her chair; her voice, which was a rather harsh-speaking voice, grew low and earnest. Was it possible that she—she, Flora Macmichel—had joined the company of the preachers! "Don't you think that alleviations undreamed of are always sent?" she asked, smarting tears in her eyes, her voice breaking.

"Perhaps I ought not to say it," the other woman said, "it is my want of faith of which I should be ashamed, but it seems to me that nothing—nothing—in this world, of course—could atone."

¶

A BELL clashed sharply.

By leaning back slightly in her chair Mrs. Jones could get, it seemed, a side view of the door.

"Dear me! It is the boy from the telegraph office," she said. "I never see him without the dreadful fear that something may be amiss. Isn't it old-fashioned of me?"

The flush which told of disease had deepened on her cheeks; she laid a hand upon her chest as she arose: "If you will excuse me for half a moment——?"

But Mrs. Macmichel had sprung to her feet and was at the door before the other. "Let me!" she said hurriedly. "I—I have my hat on. You might take cold——"

"Excuse me!" Mrs. Jones cried.

"You really must allow me!" said Mrs. Macmichel.

There was quite a scuffle at the door as to which should go out first.

It was the younger and stronger woman who dashed across the hall and snatched the telegram from the boy upon the steps. She came back crushing the orange envelope,

unopened, in her hand. Full well she knew its contents. The authorities had not waited for the father's inquiry, but had wired the news.

"It was—was for me," she said, gasping out the intelligence.

The dark eyes of the elder woman questioned her sharply. "How strange—how very strange it should have been sent on here."

"My husband knew I was coming to make—a long call. He sent it on."

Mrs. Jones sat down again before her tea-tray and in the speaking eyes was a dawning of suspicion: "I hope nothing is the matter?" she said. "You will read your telegram, Mrs. Macmichel?"

Mrs. Macmichel thrust the envelope into the pocket of her coat, and kept her hand upon it there. "It is from my dressmaker; she is always bothering," she said.

The hand which seized upon her cup again, was shaking. The slice of bread and butter was sodden with the tea which had been spilt on it as she had put it so hurriedly down. "What were we talking of?" she asked. "I—it was so interesting. Please go on."

"It was about our dear children," said Mrs. Jones slowly. She looked with a gaze of awakening distrust at her visitor. Her thoughts evidently turned to her husband. "I will hear if Mr. Jones has returned," she said. "He would be so sorry to miss you——"

She put out her hand to the bell. Mrs. Macmichel stopped her hurriedly. "Don't ring!" she said, in the loud voice of alarm. "Please! I will stay till Mr. Jones comes back, however long he is away. I promise."

Ah, if he would only come! Only half an hour lived through of the two hours yet! Yet, for worlds she would not be present at the meeting of the wife and husband, who then would—know!

"I will stay, if you will let me go the very instant he comes," she added.

"He is here!" Mrs. Jones said, with an air of relief. "I heard the garden-gate; I know his step——"

Oh, not for ten worlds would Flora, who had ever shunned the sight of pain, see that meeting! She almost flung her teacup from her. She seized the other's hand:

"Good-bye! oh, good-bye!" she said. "I cannot possibly stay another minute. I am so sorry, oh, Mrs. Jones, will you please remember, I am nearly dead with sorrow—but I must go."

"She is certainly mad," said the other woman to herself.

On the doorstep the clergyman and the lady encountered. He was panting as one, who all unaccustomed to such exercise, had run.

"They told me—at the office—a telegram had been sent," he said.

She snatched it from her pocket and put it in his hand. "I kept it from her," she said. "Take it, and let me go."

And yet she could not go.

His shaking fingers had torn open the envelope, had clutched the enclosure.

"Read it," he said to her; "I can't—I can't see."

So she read aloud to him, in a voice that rose on a note of triumph and finished in a sob, the single line of the message:

"Not on board the *Doughty*. Tell mother all right."

Mrs. Jones, coming to the dining-room door, looked out for one instant on her husband, apparently clutched in Mrs. Macmichel's embrace. In the next, the lady was speeding with her long stride down the path to the gate; the clergyman had staggered into a hall chair, a succession of sounds, something between sobs and hiccoughs, issuing from his throat.

"My dear, has she hurt you?" his wife cried excitedly. "She is mad—quite mad, I am sure!"

* * * * * *

HER husband, catching sight of Mrs. Macmichel's face as she entered, followed her upstairs to her room. She was lying, dressed as she was, on her bed with her face hidden.

"My dear, what is the matter? What have you been doing with yourself?" he asked.

She had been to the Rectory, to call on the Joneses, she told him.

"Well?"

"The *Doughty* has gone down. All on board lost."

"So I hear. Well?"

"It was their son's ship."

"Well?"

"Freddy's." She sat up and laughed across the sob in her throat. "You stupid! I am crying because Freddy did not go down in the *Doughty*," she said.

His Worship the Goosedriver

A farcical exploit turned to useful account

By ARNOLD BENNETT

IT was an amiable but deceitful afternoon in the third week of December. Snow fell heavily in the windows of confectioners' shops; and Father Christmas smiled, in Keats's Bazaar, the fawning smile of a myth who knows himself to be exploded; but beyond these and similar efforts to remedy the forgetfulness of a careless climate, there was no sign anywhere in the Five Towns, and especially in Bursley, of the immediate approach of the season of peace, good-will, and gluttony on earth.

At "The Tiger," next door to Keats's, in the Market Place, Mr. Josiah Topham Curtenty had put down his glass (the port was kept specially for him) and told his boon-companion, Mr. Gordon, that he must be going. These two men had one powerful sentiment in common—they loved the same woman. Mr. Curtenty, aged twenty-six in heart, thirty-six in mind, and forty-six in looks, was fifty-six only in years. He was a rich man. He had made money as an earthenware manufacturer in the good old times before Satan was ingenious enough to invent German competition, American tariffs, and the price of coal. He was still making money, with the aid of his son Henry, who now managed the works, but he never admitted that he was making it. No one has yet succeeded, and no one will ever succeed, in catching an earthenware manufacturer in the act of making money. He may confess with a sigh that he has performed the feat in the past, he may give utterance to a vague, preposterous hope that he will perform it again in the remote future; but as for surprising him in the very act, you would as easily surprise a hen laying an egg. Nowadays, Mr. Curtenty, commercially secure, spent most of his energy in helping to shape and control the high destinies of the town. He was Deputy-Mayor and Chairman of the General Purposes Committee of the Town Council. He was also a Guardian of the Poor, a Justice of the Peace, President of the Society for the Prosecution of Felons, a sidesman, an Oddfellow, and several other things that meant diming, shrewdness, and good nature. He was a short, stiff, stout, red-faced man, jolly with the jollity that springs from a kind heart, a humorous disposition, a perfect digestion, and the respectful deference of one's bank manager. Without being a member of the Browning Society, he held firmly to the belief that all's right with the world.

Mr. Gordon, who has but a sorry part in the drama, was a younger, quieter, less forceful person, rather shy—a municipal mediocrity, perhaps a little inflated that day by reason of his having been elected to the chairmanship of the Gas and Lighting Committee. Both men had sat on their committees at the Town Hall across the way that deceitful afternoon, and we see them now, after refreshment well earned and consumed, about to separate and sink into private life.

But as they came out into the portico of "The Tiger," the famous Calypso-like barmaid of "The Tiger" a hovering enchantment in the background, it occurred that a flock of geese were meditating, as geese will, in the middle of the road. The gooseherd, a shabby, middle-aged man, looked as though he had recently lost the battle of Marathon, and was asking himself whether the path of his retreat might not lie through the bar-parlour of "The Tiger."

"Business pretty good?" Mr. Curtenty inquired of him cheerfully. In the Five Towns, business takes the place of weather as a topic of salutation.

"Business?" echoed the gooseherd.

In that unassisted noun, scorning the aid of verb, adjective, or adverb, the gooseherd, by a masterpiece of profound and subtle emphasis, contrived to express the fact that he existed in a world of dead illusions, that he had become a convert to

Schopenhauer, and that Mr. Curtenty's inapposite geniality was a final grievance to him.

"There ain't no business," he added.

"Ah!" returned Mr. Curtenty, thoughtfully. Such an assertion of the entire absence of business was a reflection upon the town.

"Sithee!" said the gooseherd in ruthless accents, "I druv these 'ere geese into this 'ere town this morning." (Here he exaggerated the number of miles traversed.) "Twelve geese and two gander—a Brent and a Barnacle. And how many is there now? How many——"

"Fourteen," said Mr. Gordon, having counted; and Mr. Curtenty gazed at him in reproach for that he, a Town Councillor, had thus mathematically demonstrated the commercial decadence of Bursley.

"Market overstocked, eh?" Mr. Curtenty suggested, throwing a side glance at Callear's, the poulterer's close by, which was crammed with everything that flew, swam, or waddled.

"Call this a market?" said the gooseherd. "I'st tak my lot over to Hanbridge, wheer there *is* a bit doing, by all accounts."

Now, Mr. Curtenty had not the least intention of buying those geese; but nothing could be better calculated to straighten the back of a Bursley man than a reference to the mercantile activity of Hanbridge, that Chicago of the Five Towns.

"How much for the lot?" he inquired. In that moment he reflected upon his reputation; he knew that he was a cure, a card, a character; he knew that everyone would think it just like Jos Curtenty, the renowned Deputy-Mayor of Bursley, to stand on the steps of "The Tiger" and pretend to chaffer with a gooseherd for a flock of geese. His imagination caught the sound of an oft-repeated inquiry: "Did ye hear about old Jos's latest—trying to buy them there geese?"

The gooseherd faced him in silence.

"Well," said Mr. Curtenty again, his eyes twinkling, "how much for the lot?"

The gooseherd gloomily and suspiciously named a sum.

Mr. Curtenty named a sum startlingly less, ending in sixpence.

"I'll tak it," said the gooseherd, in a tone that closed on the bargain like a vice.

The Deputy-Mayor perceived himself the owner of twelve geese and two ganders —one Brent, one Barnacle. It was a shock, but he sustained it. Involuntarily he looked at Mr. Gordon.

"How are you going to get 'em home, Curtenty?" asked Gordon, with coarse sarcasm. "Drive 'em?"

Nettled, Mr. Curtenty retorted: "Now, then, Gas Gordon——"

The barmaid laughed aloud at this sobriquet, which, that same evening, was all over the town, and which has stuck ever since to the chairman of the Gas and Lighting Committee. Mr. Gordon wished, and has never ceased to wish, either that he had been elected to some other committee, or that his name had begun with some other letter.

The gooseherd received the purchase-money like an affront; but when Mr. Curtenty, full of private mirth, said, "Chuck us your stick in," he gave him the stick and smiled under reservation. Jos Curtenty had no use for the geese; he could conceive no purpose which they might be made to serve, no smallest corner for them in his universe. Nevertheless, since he had rashly stumbled into a ditch, he determined to emerge from it grandly, impressively, magnificently. He instantaneously formed a plan by which he would snatch victory out of defeat. He would take Gordon's suggestion and himself drive the geese up to his residence in Hillport, that lofty and aristocratic suburb. It would be an immense, an unparalleled farce—a topic for years, the crown of his reputation as a card.

He announced his intention with that misleading sobriety and ordinariness of tone which it has been the foible of many great humorists to assume. Mr. Gordon lifted his head several times very quickly, as if to say "What next?" and then actually departed, which was a clear proof that the man had no imagination and no soul. The gooseherd winked.

"You be rightly called Curtenty, mester," said he, and passed into "The Tiger."

"That's the best joke I ever heard," Jos said to himself. "I wonder whether he saw it."

Then the procession of the geese and the Deputy-Mayor commenced. Now, it is not to be assumed that Mr. Curtenty was necessarily bound to look foolish in the driving of geese. He was no nincompoop. On the contrary, he was one of those men who, bringing common sense and presence of mind to every action of their

lives, do nothing badly and always escape the ridiculous. He marshalled his geese with notable gumption, adopting towards them exactly the correct stress of persuasion, and presently he smiled to see them preceding him in the direction of Hillport. He looked neither to right nor left, but simply at his geese, and thus the quidnuncs of the Market Place and the supporters of shop-fronts were unable to catch his eye. He tried to feel like a gooseherd; and, such was his histrionic quality, his instinct for the dramatic, he *was* a gooseherd, despite his blue melton overcoat, his hard felt hat with the flattened top, and that opulent-curving collar which was the secret despair of the young dandies of Hillport. He had the most natural air in the world. The geese were the victims of this imaginative effort of Mr. Curtenty's. They took him seriously as a gooseherd. These fourteen intelligences, each with an object in life, each bent on self-aggrandisement and the satisfaction of desires, began to follow the line of least resistance in regard to the superior intelligence unseen but felt behind them, feigning, as geese will, that it suited them so to submit, and that in reality they were still quite independent. But in the peculiar eye of the Barnacle gander, who was leading, an observer with sufficient fancy might have deciphered a mild revolt against this triumph of the absurd, the accidental, and the futile—a passive yet Promethean spiritual defiance of the supreme powers.

Mr. Curtenty got his fourteen intelligences safely across the top of St. Luke's Square, and gently urged them into the steep defile of Oldcastle Street. By this time rumour had passed in front of him and run off down side-streets like water let into an irrigation system. At every corner was a knot of people, at most windows a face. And the Deputy-Mayor never spoke nor smiled. The farce was enormous; the memory of it would survive revolutions and religions.

Half-way down Oldcastle Street the first disaster happened. Electric tramways had not then knitted the Five Towns in a network of steel; but the last word of civilization and refinement was about to be uttered, and a gang of men were making patterns with wires on the skyscape of Oldcastle Street. One of the wires, slipping from its temporary gripper, swirled, with an extraordinary sound, into the roadway, and writhed there in spirals. Several of Mr. Curtenty's geese were knocked down, and rose, obviously annoyed; but the Barnacle gander fell with a clinging circle of wire round his muscular glossy neck, and did not rise again. It was a violent, mysterious, agonizing, and sudden death for him, and must have confirmed his theories about the arbitrariness of things. The thirteen passed pitilessly on. Mr. Curtenty freed the gander from the coiling wire and picked it up; but finding it far too heavy to carry, he handed it to a Corporation road-sweeper. "I'll send for it," he said. "Wait here."

These were the only words uttered by him during a memorable journey.

The second disaster was that the deceitful afternoon turned to rain—cold, cruel rain, persistent rain, full of sinister significance. Mr. Curtenty ruefully raised the velvet of his Melton. As he did so a brougham rolled into Oldcastle Street, a little in front of him, from the direction of St. Peter's Church, and vanished towards Hillport. He knew the carriage; he had bought it and paid for it.

Deep, far down in his mind, stirred the thought: "I'm just the least bit glad she didn't see me."

He had the suspicion, which recurs even to optimists, that happiness is, after all, a chimera.

The third disaster was that the sun set and darkness descended. Mr. Curtenty had, unfortunately, not reckoned with this diurnal phenomenon; he had not thought upon the undesirability of being under compulsion to drive geese by the sole illumination of gas-lamps lighted by Corporation gas.

After this, disasters multiplied. Dark and the rain had transformed the farce into something else. It was 5.30 when at last he reached "The Firs," and the garden of "The Firs" was filled with lamentable complainings of a remnant of geese. His man, Pond, met him with a stable lantern.

"Damp, sir?" said Pond.

"Oh, nowt to speak of!" said Mr. Curtenty, and, taking off his hat, he shot the fluid contents of the brim into Pond's face. It was his way of dotting the "i" of irony. "Missis come in?"

"Yes, sir; I have but just rubbed the horse down."

So far no reference to the surrounding geese, all forlorn in the heavy winter rain.

"I've gotten a two-three geese and one

gander here for Christmas," said Mr. Curtenty after a pause.

To inferiors he always used the dialect.

"Yes, sir."

"Turn 'em into th' orchard, as you call it."

"Yes, sir."

"They aren't all here. Thou mun put th' horse in the trap and fetch the rest thysen."

"Yes, sir."

"One's dead. A roadman's takkin' care on it in Oldcastle Street. He'll wait for thee. Give him sixpence."

"Yes, sir."

"There's another got into th' cut" (canal).

"Yes, sir."

"There's another strayed on the railway line—happen it's run over by this."

"Yes, sir."

"And one's making the best of her way to Oldcastle. I couldna coax her in here."

"Yes, sir."

"Collect 'em."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Curtenty walked away towards the house.

"Mester!" Pond called after him, flashing the lantern.

"Well, lad?"

"There's no gander i' this lot."

"Hast forgotten to count thysen," Mr. Curtenty answered blithely from the shelter of the side-door.

But within himself he was a little crestfallen to think that the surviving gander should have escaped his vigilance, even in the darkness. He had set out to drive the geese home, and he had driven them home—most of them. He had kept his temper, his dignity, his cheerfulness. He had got a bargain in geese. So much was indisputable ground for satisfaction. And yet the feeling of an anti-climax would not be dismissed. Upon the whole, his transit lacked glory. It had begun in splendour, but it had ended in discomfort and almost ignominy. Nevertheless, Mr. Curtenty's unconquerable soul asserted itself in a quite genuine and tuneful whistle as he entered the house.

The fate of the Brent gander was never ascertained.

II

THE dining-room of "The Firs" was a spacious and inviting refectory which owed nothing of its charm to William Morris, Regent Street, or the Arts and Crafts Society. Its triple aim was richness, solidity, and comfort—but especially comfort, and this aim was achieved in new oak furniture of immovable firmness, in a Turkey carpet which swallowed up the feet like a feather bed, and in large oil-paintings, whose darkly glinting frames were a guarantee of their excellence. On a winter's night, as now, the room was at its richest, solidest, most comfortable. The blue plush curtains were drawn on their stout brass rods across door and french window. "Finest selected Silkstone" fizzed and flamed in a patent grate which had the extraordinary gift of radiating heat into the apartment instead of up the chimney. The shaded Welsbach lights of the chandelier cast a dazzling luminance on the tea-table of snow and silver, while leaving the pictures in a gloom so discreet that not Ruskin himself could have decided whether these were by Whistler or Peter Paul Rubens. On either side of the marble mantelpiece were two easy-chairs of an immense, incredible capacity—chairs of crimson plush for Titans, chairs softer than moss, more pliant than a loving heart, more enveloping than a caress. In one of these chairs, that to the left of the fireplace, Mr. Curtenty was accustomed to snore every Saturday and Sunday afternoon, and almost every evening. The other was usually empty, but to-night it was occupied by Mrs. Curtenty, the jewel of the casket. (In the presence of her husband she always used a small rocking-chair of ebonised cane.)

To glance at this short, slight, yet plump little creature as she reclined crosswise in the vast chair, leaving great spaces of the seat unfilled, was to think rapturously to oneself: "*This is a woman.*" Her fluffy head was such a dot against the back of the chair; the curve of her chubby, ringed hand above the head was so adorable; her black eyes were so provocative; her slippered feet so wee; yes, and there was something so mysteriously thrilling about the fall of her skirt that you knew instantly her name was Clara, her temper both fiery and obstinate, and her personality distracting. And her years were thirty-five—it was no matter; it would have been no matter had she been a hundred and thirty-five. In short ——

Clara Curtenty wore tight-fitting black silk, with a long, gold chain that descended from her neck nearly to her waist, and was looped up in the middle to an old-fashioned

gold brooch. She was in mourning for a distant relative. Black pre-eminently suited her. Consequently her distant relatives died at frequent intervals.

The basalt clock on the mantelpiece trembled and burst into the song of six. Clara Curtenty rose swiftly from the easy-chair and took her seat in front of the tea-tray. Almost at the same moment a neat, black-and-white parlourmaid brought in teapot, copper kettle, and a silver-covered dish containing hot pikelets; then departed. Clara was alone again. Not the same Clara now, but a personage demure, prim, precise, frightfully upright of back—a sort of impregnable stronghold; without doubt a deputy-mayoress.

At five past six Josiah Curtenty entered the room, radiant from a hot bath and happy in dry clothes—a fine if mature figure of a man. His presence filled the whole room.

"Well, my chuck!" he said, and kissed her on the cheek.

She gazed at him with a look that might mean anything. Did she raise her cheek to his greeting, or was it a fancy that she had endured, rather than accepted, his kiss? He was scarcely sure. And if she had endured instead of accepting the kiss, was her mood to be attributed to his lateness for tea, or to the fact that she was aware of the episode of the geese? He could not divine.

"Pikelets! Good!" he exclaimed, taking the cover off the dish.

This strong, successful, and dominant man adored his wife and went in fear of her. She was his first love, but his second spouse; —they had been married ten years. In those ten years they had quarrelled only five times, and she had changed the very colour of his life. Till his second marriage he had boasted that he belonged to the people and retained the habits of the people. Clara, though she also belonged to the people, very soon altered all that. Clara had a passion for the genteel. Like many warm-hearted, honest, clever, and otherwise sensible persons, Clara was a snob, but a charming little snob. She ordered him to forget that he belonged to the people; she refused to listen when he talked in the dialect; she made him dress with opulence and even with tidiness; she made him buy a fashionable house and fill it with fine furniture; she made him buy a brougham, in which her gentility could pay calls and do shopping (she shopped in Oldcastle, where an aristocracy of tradesmen sneered at Hanbridge's lack of style); she had her "day"; she taught the servants to enter the reception-rooms without knocking; she took tea in bed in the morning, and tea in the afternoon in the drawing-room. She would have instituted dinner at seven, but she was a wise woman and realized that too much tyranny often means revolution and the crumbling of thrones.

She it was who had compelled Josiah (or bewitched, beguiled, coaxed, and wheedled him), after a public refusal, to accept the unusual post of Deputy-Mayor. In two years' time he might count on being Mayor. Why, then, should Clara have been so anxious for this secondary dignity? Because in that year of royal festival, Bursley, in common with many other boroughs, had had a fancy to choose a Mayor out of the House of Lords. The Earl of Chell, a magnate of the county, had consented to wear the mayoral chain and dispense the mayoral hospitalities, on condition that he was provided with a deputy for daily use.

It was the idea of herself being deputy to the lovely, meddlesome, and arrogant Countess of Chell that had appealed to Clara.

The deputy of a countess at length spoke.

"Will Harry be late at the works again to-night?" she asked, in her colder, small-talk manner, which committed her to nothing, as Josiah well knew.

Her way of saying that word "Harry" was inimitably significant. She gave it an air. She liked Harry, and she liked Harry's name because it had a Kensingtonian sound. Harry, so accomplished in business, was also a dandy, and he was a dog. "My stepson!"—she loved to introduce him, so tall, manly, distinguished, and dandiacal. Harry, enriched by his own mother, belonged to a London club; he ran down to Llandudno for week-ends; and it was reported that he had been behind the scenes at the Alhambra. . . . Clara felt for the word "Harry" the unreasoning affection which most women lavish on "George."

"Like as not," said Josiah. "I haven't been to the works this afternoon."

Another silence fell, and then Josiah, feeling himself unable to bear any further suspense as to his wife's real mood and temper, suddenly determined to tell her all about the geese, and know the worst. And precisely at the instant that he opened his mouth, the maid opened the door and announced:

"Mr. Duncalf wishes to see you at once, sir; he won't keep you a minute."

"Ask him in here, Mary," said the Deputy-Mayoress sweetly; "and bring another cup and saucer."

Mr. Duncalf was the Town Clerk of Bursley—legal, portly, dry, and a little shy.

"I won't stop, Curtenty—how d'ye do, Mrs. Curtenty?—no, thanks, really——"

But she, smiling, exquisitely gracious, flattered and smoothed him into a chair.

"Any interesting news, Mr. Duncalf?" she said; and added: "But we're glad that *anything* should have brought you in——"

"Well," said Duncalf, "I've just had a letter by the afternoon post from Lord Chell."

"Oh, the Earl! Indeed! How very interesting!"

"What's he after?" inquired Josiah cautiously.

"He says he's just been appointed Governor of East Australia—announcement'll be in to-morrow's papers—and so he must regretfully resign the mayoralty. Says he'll pay the fine; but, of course, we shall have to remit that by special resolution of the Council."

"Well, I'm hanged!" Josiah exclaimed.

"Topham!" Mrs. Curtenty remonstrated, but with a delightful, acquitting dimple. She never would call him Josiah, much less Jos. Topham came more easily to her lips, and sometimes Top.

"Your husband," said Mr. Duncalf impressively to Clara, "will, of course, have to step into the Mayor's shoes, and you'll have to fill the place of the Countess." He paused and added: "And very well you'll do it, too; very well! Nobody better!"

The Town Clerk frankly admired Clara.

"Mr. Duncalf! Mr. Duncalf!" she raised a finger at him. "You are the most shameless flatterer in the town."

The flatterer was flattered. Having delivered the weighty news, he had leisure to savour his own importance as the bearer of it. He drank a cup of tea. Josiah was thoughtful, but Clara brimmed over with a fascinating loquacity. Then Mr. Duncalf said that he must really be going, and having arranged with the Mayor-elect to call a special meeting of the Council at once, he did go—all the while wishing he had the enterprise to stay.

Josiah accompanied him to the front door. The sky had now cleared.

"Thank ye for calling," said the host.

"Oh, that's all right! Good night, Curtenty. Got that goose out of the canal?"

So the story was all abroad!

Josiah returned to the dining-room, imperceptibly smiling. At the door, the sight of his wife halted him. The face of that precious and adorable woman flamed out lightnings and all menace and offence. Her louring eyes showed what a triumph of dissimulation she must have achieved in presence of Mr. Duncalf, but now she could speak her mind.

"Yes, Topham," she exploded, as though finishing a harangue. "And on this day of all days you choose to drive geese in the public road behind my carriage!"

Jos was stupefied, annihilated.

"Did you see me, then, Clarry?"

He vainly tried to carry it off.

"Did I see you? Of course I saw you!"

She withered him up with the hot wind of scorn.

"Well," he said foolishly, "how was I to know that the Earl would resign just to-day?"

"How were you to——?"

Harry came in for his tea. He glanced from one to the other, discreet, silent. On the way home he had heard the tale of the geese in seven different forms. The Deputy Mayor, so soon to be Mayor, walked out of the room, crushed.

"Pond has just come back, father," said Harry. "I drove up the hill with him."

As Josiah hesitated a moment, he heard Clara exclaim:

"Oh! Harry——!"

"Hang it!" he murmured.

III

THE *Signal* of the following day contained the announcement which Mr. Duncalf had forecast. It also stated on authority that Mr. Josiah Curtenty would wear the mayoral chain of Bursley immediately, and added as its own private opinion that, in default of the Right Honourable the Earl of Chell and his Countess, no better "civic heads" could have been found than Mr. Curtenty and his charming wife. But underneath all this was a sub-title: "Amusing Exploit of the Mayor-Elect," followed by a facetious and rather mordant description of the procession of the geese, a description which concluded by referring to Mr. Curtenty as his Worship the Goosedriver. Hanbridge,

Knype, Longshaw, and Turnhill laughed heartily, and perhaps a little viciously, at this paragraph, but Bursley was annoyed by it. In print the affair did not look at all well. Bursley prided itself on possessing a unique dignity as the "Mother of the Five Towns," and to be presided over by a goosedriver, however humorous and hospitable he might be, did not consort with that dignity. A certain Mayor of Longshaw, years before, had driven a sow to market and derived a tremendous advertisement therefrom, but Bursley had no wish to rival Longshaw in any particular. Bursley regarded Longshaw as the *inferno* of the Five Towns. In Bursley you were bidden to go to Longshaw as you were bidden to go to ——. Certain acute people in Hillport saw nothing but a paralyzing insult in the opinion of the *Signal* (first and foremost a Hanbridge organ) that Bursley could find no better civic head than Josiah Curtenty. At least three Aldermen and seven councillors privately, and in "The Tiger," disagreed with any such view of Bursley's capacity to find heads.

And underneath all this brooding dissatisfaction lurked the thought, as the alligator lurks in a muddy river, that "the Earl wouldn't like it," meaning the geese episode. It was generally felt that the Earl had been badly treated by Jos Curtenty. The town could not explain its sentiments, could not argue about them; they were not, in fact, capable of logical justification. But they were there: they violently existed. It would have been useless to point out that if the inimitable Jos had not been called to the mayoralty, the episode of the geese would have passed as a gorgeous joke; that everyone had been vastly amused by it until that desolating issue of the *Signal* announced the Earl's retirement; that Jos Curtenty could not possibly have foreseen what was about to happen; and that, anyhow, goosedriving was less a crime than a social solecism, and less a social solecism than a brilliant eccentricity. Bursley was hurt, and logic is no balm for wounds.

Some may ask: If Bursley was offended, why did it not mark its sense of Josiah's failure to read the future by electing another Mayor? The answer is that while all were agreed that his antic was inexcusable, all were equally agreed to pretend that it was a mere trifle of no importance. You cannot deprive a man of his prescriptive right for a mere trifle of no importance. Besides, nobody could be so foolish as to imagine that goosedriving, though reprehensible in a mayor about to succeed an earl, is an act of which official notice can be taken.

The most curious thing in the whole *imbroglio* is that Josiah Curtenty secretly agreed with his wife and the town. He was ashamed, overset. His procession of geese appeared to him in an entirely new light, and he had to admit to himself:

"I've made a fool of myself."

Harry went to London for a week, and Josiah, under plea of his son's absence, spent eight hours a day at the works. The brougham remained in the coach-house.

The Town Council duly met in special conclave, and Josiah Topham Curtenty became Mayor of Bursley.

Shortly after Christmas it was announced that the Mayor and Mayoress had decided to give a New Year's treat to four hundred poor old people in the St. Luke's covered market. It was also spread about that this treat would eclipse all previous treats of a similar nature, and that it might be accepted as some slight foretaste of the hospitality which the Mayor and Mayoress would dispense in that notable year of royal festival. The treat was to occur on the 9th of January, the Mayoress's birthday

On the 7th of January, Josiah happened to go home early. He was proceeding into the drawing-room, without enthusiasm, to greet his wife, when he heard voices within; and one voice was the voice of Gas Gordon.

Jos stood still. It has been mentioned that Gordon and the Mayor were in love with the same woman. The Mayor had easily captured her under the very guns of his not formidable rival, and he had always thereafter felt a kind of benevolent, good-humoured, contemptuous pity for Gordon —Gordon, whose life was a tragic blank, Gordon, who lived, a melancholy and defeated bachelor, with his mother and two unmarried sisters older than himself. That Gordon still worshipped at the shrine did not disturb him; on the contrary, it pleased him. Poor Gordon!

"But, really, Mrs. Curtenty," Gordon was saying, "really, you know, I—that is—really——!"

"To please me!" Mrs. Curtenty entreated, with a seductive charm that Jos felt even outside the door.

Then there was a pause.

"Very well!" said Gordon.

Mr. Curtenty tiptoed away. He walked

in the dark nearly to Oldcastle and returned about six o'clock. But Clara said no word of Gordon's visit. She had scarcely spoken to Topham for three weeks.

The next morning, as Harry was departing to the works, Mrs. Curtenty followed the handsome youth into the hall.

"Harry," she whispered, "bring me two ten-pound notes this afternoon, will you, and say nothing to your father."

Gas Gordon was to be on the platform at the poor people's treat. As he walked down Trafalgar Road, his eye caught a still-exposed fragment of a decayed bill on a hoarding. It referred to a meeting of the local branch of the Anti-Gambling League, a year ago, in the Lecture Hall of the Wesleyan Chapel, and it said that Councillor Gordon would occupy the chair on that occasion. Mechanically, Councillor Gordon stopped and tore the fragment away.

The treat, which took the form of a dinner, was an unqualified success: it surpassed all expectations. Even the diners themselves were satisfied—a rare thing at such affairs. Goose was a prominent item in the *menu*. After the repast, the replete guests were entertained from the platform, the Mayor being, of course, in the chair. Harry sang "In Old Madrid," accompanied by his stepmother, with faultless expression. Mr. Duncalf astonished everybody with the famous North-country recitation, "The Patent Hair-Brushing Mashane." There were also a banjo solo, a skirt-dance of discretion, and a campanological "turn." At last Mr. Gordon rose in his place, amid good-natured cries of "Gas!"

"I feel sure you will all agree with me," he began, "that this evening would not be complete without a very hearty vote of thanks to our excellent host and chairman."

Ear-splitting applause.

"I've got a little story to tell you," he continued, "a story that up to this moment has been a close secret between his Worship the Mayor and myself." His Worship looked up sharply at the speaker. "You've heard about some geese, I reckon. (Laughter.) Well, you've not heard all, but I'm going to tell you. I can't keep it to myself any longer. You think his Worship drove those geese—I hope they're digesting well (loud laughter)—just for fun. He didn't. I was with him when he bought them, and I happened to say that goose-driving was very difficult."

"Depends on the geese," shouted a voice.

"Yes, it does," Mr. Gordon admitted. "Well, his Worship contradicted me, and we had a bit of an argument. I don't bet, as you know—at least, not often—but I don't mind confessing that I offered to bet him a sovereign he couldn't drive his geese half a mile. 'Look here, Gordon,' he said to me, 'there's a lot of distress in the town just now—trade bad,' and so on and so on. 'I'll lay you a level ten pounds I drive these geese to Hillport myself, the loser to give the money to charity.' 'Done,' I said. 'Don't say anything about it,' he says. 'I won't,' I says—but I *am* doing. (Applause.) I feel it my duty to say something about it. (More applause.) Well, I lost. as you all know. He drove 'em to Hillport, ("Good old Jos!") "That's not all. The Mayor insisted on putting his own ten pounds to mine and making it twenty. Here are the two identical notes, his and mine." Mr. Gordon waved the identical notes amid an uproar. "We've decided that everyone who has dined here to-night shall receive a brand-new shilling. I see Mr. Septimus Lovatt, from the bank, there, with a bag. He will attend to you as you go out. (Wild tumult of rapturous applause.) And now, three cheers for your Mayor and Mayoress."

It was colossal, the enthusiasm.

"*And* for Gas Gordon!" called several voices.

The cheers rose again in surging waves.

Everyone remarked that the Mayor, usually so imperturbable, seemed as if he didn't know where to look.

Afterwards, as the occupants of the platform descended, Mr. Gordon glanced into the eyes of Mrs. Curtenty and found there his exceeding reward. The mediocrity had blossomed out that evening into something new and strange. Liar, deliberate liar, and self-accused gambler as he was, he felt that he had lived during that speech—he felt that it was the supreme moment of his life.

"What a perfectly wonderful man your husband is!" said Mrs. Duncalf to Mrs. Curtenty.

Clara turned to her husband with a sublime gesture of satisfaction. In the brougham, going home, she bewitched him with wifely endearments. She could afford to do so. The stigma of the geese episode was erased!

But the barmaid of "The Tiger," as she let down her bright hair that night in the attic of "The Tiger," said to herself: "Well, of all the ——" Just that.

Mrs. Adis

And a man who did the only possible thing

By SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

IN north-east Sussex a great tongue of land runs into Kent by Scotney Castle. It is a land of woods—the old hammer woods of the Sussex iron industry—and among the woods gleam the hammer-ponds, holding in their mirrors the sunsets and sunrises. Owing to the thickness of the woods—great masses of oak and beech in a dense undergrowth of hazel and chestnut and frail sallow—the road that passes Mrs. Adis's cottage is dark before the twilight has crept away from the fields beyond. That night there was no twilight and no moon, only a few pricks of fire in the black sky above the trees. But what the darkness hid the silence revealed. In the absolute stillness of the night, windless and clear with the first frost of October, every sound was distinct, intensified. The distant bark of a dog at Delmonden sounded close at hand, and the man who walked on the road could hear the echo of his own footsteps following him like a knell.

Every now and then he made an effort to go more quietly, but the roadside was a mass of brambles, and their crackling and rustling was nearly as loud as the thud of his feet on the marl. Besides, they made him go slowly, and he had no time for that.

When he came to Mrs. Adis's cottage he paused a moment. Only a small patch of grass lay between it and the road. He went stealthily across it and looked in at the lighted, uncurtained window. He could see Mrs. Adis stooping over the fire, taking some pot or kettle off it. He hesitated and seemed to wonder. He was a big, hulking man, with reddish hair and freckled face, evidently of the labouring class, but not successful, judging by the vague grime and poverty of his appearance. For a moment he made as if he would open the window, then he changed his mind and went to the door instead.

He did not knock, but walked straight in. The woman at the fire turned quickly round.

"What you, Peter Crouch?" she said. "I didn't hear you knock."

"I didn't knock, ma'am. I didn't want anybody to hear."

"How's that?"

"I'm in trouble." His hands were shaking a little.

"What you done?"

"I shot a man, Mrs. Adis."

"You?"

"Yes—I shot him."

"You killed him?"

"I dunno."

For a moment there was silence in the small, stuffy kitchen. Then the kettle boiled over and Mrs. Adis sprang for it, mechanically putting it at the side of the fire.

She was a small, frail-looking woman, with a brown, hard face on which the skin had dried in innumerable small, hair-like wrinkles. She was probably not more than forty-two, but life treats some women hard in the agricultural districts of Sussex, and Mrs. Adis's life had been harder than most.

"What do you want me to do for you, Peter Crouch?" she said, a little sourly.

"Let me stay here a bit. Is there nowhere you can put me till they've gone?"

"Who's they?"

"The keepers."

"Oh, you've had a shine with the keepers, have you?"

"Yes. I was down by Cinder Wood seeing if I could pick up anything, and the keepers found me. There was four to one, so I used my gun. Then I ran for it. They're after me; reckon they aren't far off now."

Mrs. Adis did not speak for a moment.

Crouch looked at her searchingly, beseechingly.

"You might do it for Tom's sake," he said.

"You haven't been an over-good friend to Tom," snapped Mrs. Adis.

"But Tom's been an unaccountable good

friend to me; reckon he would want you to stand by me to-night."

"Well, I won't say he wouldn't, seeing as Tom always thought better of you than you deserved. Maybe you can stay till he comes home to-night, then we can hear what he says about it."

"That'll serve my turn, I reckon. He'll be up at Ironlatch for an hour yet, and the coast will be clear by then—I can get away out of the country."

"Where'll you go?"

"I dunno. There's time to think of that."

"Well, you can think of it in here," she said dryly, opening a door which led from the kitchen into the small lean-to of the cottage. "They'll never guess you're there, specially if I tell them I ain't seen you to-night."

"You're a good woman, Mrs. Adis. I know I'm not worth your standing by me, but maybe I'd ha' been different if I'd had a mother like Tom's."

She did not speak, but shut the door, and he was in darkness save for a small ray of light that filtered through one of the cracks. By this light he could see her moving to and fro, preparing Tom's supper. In another hour Tom would be home from Ironlatch Farm, where he worked every day. Peter Crouch trusted Tom not to revoke his mother's kindness, for they had been friends when they went together to the National School at Lamberhurst, and since then the friendship had not been broken by their very different characters and careers.

Peter Crouch huddled down upon the sacks that filled one corner of the lean-to and gave himself up to the dreary and anxious game of waiting. A delicious smell of cooking began to filter through from the kitchen, and he hoped Mrs. Adis would not deny him a share of the supper when Tom came home, for he was very hungry and he had a long way to go.

He had fallen into a kind of helpless doze, haunted by the memories of the last two hours, re-cast in the form of dreams, when he was roused by the sound of footsteps on the road.

For a moment his poor heart nearly choked him with its beating. They were the keepers. They had guessed for a cert where he was—with Mrs. Adis, his old pal's mother. He had been a fool to come to the cottage. Nearly losing his self-control, he shrank into the corner shivering, half sobbing. But the footsteps went by. They did not even hesitate at the door. He heard them ring away into the frosty stillness. The next minute Mrs. Adis stuck her head into the lean-to.

"That was them," she said shortly. "A party from the Castle. I saw them go by. They had lanterns, and I saw old Crotch and the two Boormans. Maybe it 'ud be better if you slipped out now and went towards Cansiron. You'd miss them that way and get over to Kent. There's a London train comes from Tunbridge Wells at ten to-night."

"That'd be a fine thing for me, ma'am, but I haven't the price of a ticket on me."

She went to one of the kitchen drawers. "Here's seven shillun. It'll be your fare to London and a bit over."

For a moment he did not speak, then he said: "I don't know how to thank you, ma'am."

"Oh, you needn't thank me. I am doing it for Tom. I know how unaccountable set he is on you, and always was."

"I hope you won't get into trouble because of this."

"There ain't much fear. No one's ever likely to know you've been in this cottage. That's why I'd sooner you went before Tom came back, for maybe he'd bring a pal with him, and that'd make trouble. I won't say I shan't have it on my conscience for having helped you to escape the law, but shooting a keeper ain't the same as shooting an ordinary sort of man, as we all know, and maybe he ain't so much the worse, so I won't think no more about it."

She opened the door for him, but on the threshold they both stood still, for again footsteps could be heard approaching, this time from the south.

"Maybe it's Tom," said Mrs. Adis.

"There's more than one man there, and I can hear voices."

"You'd better go back," she said shortly. "Wait till they've passed, anyway."

With an unwilling shrug he went back into the little dusty lean-to, which he had come to hate, and she shut the door upon him.

The footsteps drew nearer. They came more slowly and heavily this time. For a moment he thought they would pass also, but their momentary dulling was only the crossing of the strip of grass outside the door. The next minute there was a knock. It was not Tom, then.

Trembling with anxiety and curiosity,

Peter Crouch put his eye to one of the numerous cracks in the lean-to door and looked through into the kitchen. He saw Mrs. Adis go to the cottage door, but before she could open it a man came quickly in and shut it behind him.

Crouch recognized Vidler, one of the keepers of Scotney Castle, and he felt his hands and feet grow leaden cold. They knew where he was, then. They had followed him. They had guessed that he had taken refuge with Mrs. Adis. It was all up. He was not really hidden; there was no place for him to hide. Directly they opened the inner door they would see him. Why couldn't he think of things better. Why wasn't he cleverer at looking after himself—like other men? His legs suddenly refused to support him, and he sat down on the pile of sacks.

The man in the kitchen seemed to have some difficulty in saying what he wanted to Mrs. Adis. He stood before her silently, twisting his cap.

"Well, what is it?" she asked.

"I want to speak to you, ma'am."

Peter Crouch listened, straining his ears, for his thudding heart nearly drowned the voices in the next room. Oh no, he was sure she would not give him away. If only for Tom's sake. She was a game sort, Mrs. Adis.

"Well?" she said sharply as the man remained tongue-tied.

"I have brought you bad news, Mrs. Adis."

Her expression changed.

"What? It ain't Tom, is it?"

"He's outside," said the keeper.

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. Adis, and she moved towards the door.

"Don't, ma'am. Not till I've told you."

"Told me what? Oh, be quick, man, for mercy's sake," and she tried to push past him to the door.

"There's been a row," he said, "down by Cinder Wood. There was a chap there snaring rabbits, and Tom was walking with the Boormans and me and old Crotch down from the Castle. We heard a noise in the Eighteen-pounder Spinney, and there—— It was too dark to see who it was, and directly he saw us he made off—but we'd scared him, and he let fly with his gun——"

He stopped speaking and looked at her, as if beseeching her to fill in the gaps of his story. In his corner of the lean-to Peter Crouch was as a man of wood and sawdust.

"Tom——" said Mrs. Adis.

The keeper had forgotten his guard, and before he could prevent her she had flung open the door.

The men outside had evidently been waiting for the signal, and they came in, carrying something on a hurdle, which they put down in the middle of the kitchen floor.

"Is he dead?" asked Mrs. Adis, without tears.

The men nodded. They could not find a dry voice like hers.

In the lean-to Peter Crouch had ceased to sweat and tremble. Strength had come with despair, for he knew he must despair now. Besides, he no longer wanted to escape from this thing that he had done. Oh, Tom!—and I was thinking it was one of them demned keepers. Oh, Tom! And it was you that got it—got it from me! Reckon I don't want to live!

And yet life was sweet, for there was a woman at Ticehurst, a woman as staunch to him as Tom, who would go with him to the world's end even now. But he must not think of her. He had no right, his life was forfeit to Mrs. Adis.

She was sitting in the old basket armchair by the fire. One of the men had helped her into it. Another man, with rough kindness, had poured her out something from a flask he carried in his pocket. "Here, ma'am, take a drop of this. It'll give you strength.

"We'll go round to Ironlatch cottage and ask Mrs. Gain to come down to you."

"Reckon this is a turble thing to have come to you, but it's the will o' Providence, as some folks say; and as for the man who did it—we've a middling good guess who he is, and he shall swing."

"We didn't see his face, but we've got his gun. He threw it into an alder when he bolted, and I swear that gun belongs to Peter Crouch, who's been up to no good since the day when Mus' Scales sacked him for stealing his corn."

"Reckon, tho', he didn't know it was Tom when he did it—he and Tom always being better friends than he deserved."

Peter Crouch was standing upright now, looking through the crack of the door. He saw Mrs. Adis struggle to her feet and stand by the table, looking down on the dead man's face. A whole eternity seemed to roll by as she stood there. He saw her put her hand into her apron pocket, where she had thrust the key of the lean-to.

"The Boormans have gone after Crouch," said Vidler, nervously breaking the silence. "They'd a notion as he'd broken through the woods Ironlatch way. There's no chance of his having been by here? You haven't seen him to-night, ma'am?"

There was a pause.

"No," said Mrs. Adis, "I haven't seen him. Not since Tuesday." She took her hand out of her apron pocket.

"Well, we'll be getting around and fetch Mrs. Gain. Reckon you'd be glad to have her."

Mrs. Adis nodded.

"Will you carry him in there first?" and she pointed to the bedroom door.

The men picked up the hurdle and carried it into the next room. Then silently each wrung the mother by the hand and went away.

She waited until they had shut the door, then she came towards the lean-to. Crouch once more fell a-shivering. He couldn't bear it. No, he'd rather swing than face Mrs. Adis. He heard the key turn in the lock, and he nearly screamed.

But she did not come in. She merely unlocked the door, then crossed the kitchen with a heavy, dragging footstep and shut herself into the room where Tom was.

Peter Crouch knew what he must do—the only thing she wanted him to do, the only thing he could possibly do. He opened the door and silently went out.

IN THE DARK By A. A. MILNE

A delightful new poem by the author of "When we were very young"

I'VE had my supper,
And *had* my supper,
And HAD my supper and all;
I've heard the story
Of Cinderella,
And how she went to the ball;
I've cleaned my teeth,
And I've said my prayers,
And I've cleaned and said them right;
And they've all of them been
And kissed me lots,
They've all of them said "Good night."

So—here I am in the dark alone,
There's nobody here to see;
I think to myself,
I play to myself,
And nobody knows what I say to myself;
Here I am in the dark alone,
What is it going to be?
I can think whatever I like to think,
I can play whatever I like to play,
I can laugh whatever I like to laugh,
There's nobody here but me.

I'm talking to a rabbit . . .
I'm talking to the sun . . .
I think I am a hundred—
I'm one.
I'm lying in a forest . . .
I'm lying in a cave . . .
I'm talking to a Dragon . . .
I'm BRAVE.
I'm lying on my left side . . .
I'm lying on my right . . .
I'll play a lot to-morrow . . .
. . . . . .
I'll think a lot to-morrow . . .
. . . . . .
I'll laugh . . .
a lot . . .
to-morrow . . .
(*Heigh-ho!*) Good night.

A Legend of London

A New Play

By MICHAEL ARLEN

TIME: *After dinner.*

We are looking into a drawing-room. We see two or three tall windows. They are flung wide open, for the night is sultry. Through them we can see, or we think that we can see, the trees in the gardens of Berkeley Square.

The curtains are not drawn across the windows. They fall in folds of shining silver to the floor. It is all very charming and expensive.

Then there is a sofa, very sober, and some cushions, very gay. At the sofa's head stands a tall lamp. The light of this lamp falls directly on the sofa, leaving the rest of the room dim. There is also a gramophone somewhere: one of those that not unsuccessfully aspire to the dignity of a piece of furniture. On a secretaire, a telephone. And chairs, tables, whatnots.

DISCOVERED: MRS. LOYALTY, *her* HUSBAND, *and silence. It is one of those silences. She is lying at her ease on the sofa, her head deep in a crimson cushion. Maybe she is thinking, maybe she is not. One hand hangs vaguely down so that her fingers trail along the rug. A bracelet of diamonds glitters on her slender forearm. She looks bored. And somewhere about her there is an unlighted cigarette.*

RALPH LOYALTY *is standing near the fireplace, reading a paper, smoking a cigar. If his wife is bored with him, you can understand why. The paper rustles as he reads.*

The rustling disturbs his wife. She points that out, but without marked feeling. . . She does very few things with any marked feeling. A still, quiet lady.

MRS. LOYALTY: Dear, *must* you make that noise?

LOYALTY: What noise?

MRS. LOYALTY: That noise like money—with that paper.

LOYALTY: Sorry. . . . [*He reads awhile.*] There's a lot of stuff here about Johnnie Galt divorcing his wife.

MRS. LOYALTY: I'm not very interested in Johnnie Galt.

LOYALTY: Nor was she, it appears. An Argentine fellow is the co-respondent.

MRS. LOYALTY: I am told that Argentines make quite satisfactory co-respondents. Quite a number of people are using them this year.

[*He goes on reading, rustling, smoking. She at last notices that she has not yet lit her cigarette.*]

MRS. LOYALTY: Match, please.

[RALPH LOYALTY, *still reading, fumbles in his pockets, produces a match-box, and absent-mindedly throws it across the room so that it alights on her lap.*]

MRS. LOYALTY *only looks at him; then lights her cigarette, and says, but entirely without bitterness:*

If anyone were to ask me frankly, I would reply that this is not *my* idea of an evening's entertainment.

LOYALTY [*reading his paper*]: What would you like me to do—stand on my head and crack nuts with my tonsils?

[*She does not trouble to answer. There, lying on the sofa, she is beautiful, abstracted, melancholy.*]

RALPH LOYALTY *seems suddenly to have lost interest in his paper. He is staring at his wife. Suddenly he throws the paper down:*

Oh, damn!

[*She has not appeared to hear him.* MRS. LOYALTY *has at times an exquisite talent for not hearing anything.*]

Well, why don't you say something? Didn't you hear me say "damn"?

MRS. LOYALTY: Yes, dear. But you so seldom say anything else. . . . .

LOYALTY: Oh, so you've grown not to like my conversation, then?

MRS. LOYALTY: Of course, if you like to *call* it conversation . . .

LOYALTY: Well, go on—be clever! What do *you* call it?

MRS. LOYALTY [*vaguely*]: There aren't words, dear, to describe your lack of them.

LOYALTY: Thank you. I suppose you'd like me to make pretty speeches to you?

MRS. LOYALTY: Oh, I don't know what I'd like!

LOYALTY: Yes, that's just the trouble with women like you, Joan—you simply don't know what you'd like.

MRS. LOYALTY [*to the ceiling*]: Yes, dear. But I am quite certain about what I *don't* like.

LOYALTY: Me, for instance?

MRS. LOYALTY: I am very fond of you, Ralph.

LOYALTY: You've a damn funny way of showing it!

MRS. LOYALTY: I am as God made me.

LOYALTY: You were, you mean. . . . Joan, shall I tell you the real tragedy of life?

MRS. LOYALTY: Tell me the name of the book instead, dear, and I will read it myself.

LOYALTY: The damnable tragedy of life is—that one gets used to being unhappy.

MRS. LOYALTY [*glancing at him, almost sitting up*]: But that's surely why one gets married, isn't it? For if one never got married, one would never get used to being unhappy . . . and that would be dreadful, wouldn't it?

LOYALTY [*with the terrible flair of an Englishman for being annoyed at anything that sounds in the least bit clever*]: Oh, go to hell!

[*And, furiously, he is banging out of the room.*]

MRS. LOYALTY: Ralph, if you are going down to the study, will you please send me up the novel I am reading?

[*The only answer she gets is the slam of the door. And then, slowly, for the first time since the rise of the curtain on the private life of the Loyaltys, she moves. She rises from the sofa. She puts out her cigarette on an ash-tray somewhere. She picks up a journal and drops it. Suddenly, on an impulse, she goes swiftly to the telephone on the beautiful secretaire near the fireplace, and takes up the receiver.*]

Smith, get me White's Club, please.

[*She hangs up the receiver, her hand still on the telephone. She waits, thoughtfully. The bell rings.*]

White's? Would you see if Mr. Carr is in the club, please? Mrs. Loyalty.

[*Pause.*]

Just a few minutes ago? . . . Thank you.

[*She slowly, thoughtfully, replaces the receiver, looking as though into nothing. But* MRS. LOYALTY *is not a woman who takes her tragedies tragically. That must always be kept in mind. Even as she replaces the receiver, enter* SMITH, *with a tray, on which are a decanter of whisky, siphons, etc. He is putting the tray down when* MRS. LOYALTY *observes him.*]

You can take all that away, Smith. We shall not be drinking to-night.

SMITH: Very good, madam.

[*Exit* SMITH, *with tray.*]

MRS. LOYALTY, *obviously at a loss for what to do, goes to the handsome gramophone, and is about to play the confounded thing, when, on an impulse, she goes to the door and calls:*

Smith—Smith!

[*She comes back. Enter* SMITH, *without the tray, which he may have left on the stairs—or with the tray, if you like.*]

Ah, Smith. . . . You might just go down to the study and bring up my book. You will find it on the desk, I think—a slender, blue book by a Mr. Beerbohm.

SMITH [*with hesitation*]: Mr. Loyalty is in the study, madam . . .

MRS. LOYALTY [*As she speaks, you can see instantly why dogs and servants like her on sight*]: But that is the privilege of any gentleman, Smith, to be in the study! How does it affect my request?

SMITH: Well, madam . . . as Mr. Loyalty went in he gave me very definite instructions that he was not to be disturbed.

MRS. LOYALTY [*smiling*]: I see. . . . Very good, Smith.

[*Exit* SMITH.]

[MRS. LOYALTY *returns to the gramophone, and this time goes through with it. A tango is the result.* MRS. LOYALTY, *lighting a cigarette, goes to the door and*

out, leaving the door open behind her. The tango naturally goes on "haunting." Mrs. Loyalty returns only just before the audience, thinking that the play is at an end, are preparing to set fire to the building before leaving it in a body. She re-enters slowly, the book hanging from her hand. She closes the door behind her—slowly. She walks towards the sofa. The tango goes on. Mrs. Loyalty appears to be suffering under some almost intolerable burden of thought. She commands our sympathy, for she is young and beautiful. She has to stop once, supporting herself with one hand on the back of a chair, the other being pressed to her forehead. She is, of course, also carrying a book, but all that could be arranged by an intelligent producer. At last she is sitting in a corner of the sofa, the corner under the lamp. The tango dies naturally, as the gramophone is one of those that do not need "seeing to." Mrs. Loyalty opens her book, but any fool can see that she isn't reading it. Suddenly she starts, one hand pressed to her breast. She stares towards the door, about which there is dimness. The door has opened. A dark shadow is there—a dark shadow with a white shirt. The book slips from her hand to the floor. The man comes forward. He is, of course, Hugo Carr.]

Mrs. Loyalty [*with relief, surprise, pleasure, and nerves*]: Hugo!

Carr [*gaily, fondly*]: Why, Joan, I never thought I would live to see *you* look frightened!

[*A shy, attractive man this* Hugo Carr, *with an infinite capacity for finding "things" unbearable.*]

Mrs. Loyalty: Well, you did come in rather like a ghost, didn't you?

Carr: You to be frightened of ghosts, Joan! You who are always so poised and calm and unafraid! Sometimes your calmness terrifies me, Joan.

Mrs. Loyalty: Don't let it terrify you to-night, please. . . . Kiss me, Hugo.

[*He bends on a knee, he takes her face between his hands, he kisses her lips.*]

And there are fools in this world who do not think the world well lost for a kiss! [*He sits beside her, close to her.*]

Carr: But why were you so surprised when I came in?

Mrs. Loyalty: Surprised! Does a god walk into my drawing-room every evening that I should not be surprised!

Carr: For those beautiful flowers, I thank you. [*He kisses her.*] But didn't Ralph tell you I was coming? I saw him before dinner at the club, and told him I might drop in later. . . .

Mrs. Loyalty: No, he didn't tell me. [*Suddenly shaking her head, as though dismissing an idea.*] But, Hugo, why didn't you let *me* know directly?

[*He is about to speak when she goes on quickly*]

Wait! While you are answering that question you might as well answer another. Why haven't you been near me this last week? Are you tired of me, dear; my so *very* dear? Have I become a bore to you?

Carr [*taking her hand*]: Don't say those things, Joan. They hurt. You know they're not true.

Mrs. Loyalty: And you really love me, Hugo? You really love me?

Carr: God, haven't I proved that! What is the matter with you to-night, Joan? Haven't I proved that I love you more than—[*He hesitates for a Big thing*] honour?

Mrs. Loyalty: I'd much rather you had said "golf," dear. I like a comparison I can get *hold* of.

Carr [*very seriously*]: Some men can live and be happy without honour, Joan. Some men can love and be happy without honour. But I'm not like that.

Mrs. Loyalty [*very tenderly*]: Poor Hugo! You've had to love without it for two years, haven't you?

Carr: Yes. . . .

Mrs. Loyalty [*suddenly*]: Do you know, Hugo, that I've often thought that talking of honour when one is dishonourably in love is like an aphrodisiac. It makes me love more instead of less. If I ever reflect upon my sins, I find them delightful—that's terribly wrong of me, isn't it, Hugo?

Carr [*suddenly, firmly*]: Listen, Joan——

Mrs. Loyalty: My lord, master, beloved—speak.

Carr: I've had as much as I can bear of

this hole-and-corner business. We can't go on like this, Joan. You and I have been living a lie for two years. For two whole years we've been lovers—behind Ralph's back. Your husband and my best friend. And we've always drugged ourselves by saying that we couldn't help it——

MRS. LOYALTY [*low*]: *You* have. I don't need drugs—when I love.

CARR: Yes, I have. That's why I haven't been near you this last week. I've been thinking, Joan——

MRS. LOYALTY [*passing a hand gently over his forehead*]: Poor, poor Hugo, you look tired!

CARR: And I've come to a decision. That's why I am here to-night. I've come to see Ralph. I am going to ask him to give you your freedom.

MRS. LOYALTY [*low*]: But I've got my freedom, Hugo! I am free to love you, aren't I? No one can take that away from me—not even you!

CARR: There you go—confusing me again! You always begin confusing me, Joan, when I begin talking of honour——

MRS. LOYALTY: Honour is such a confusing word, dear.

CARR [*firmly*]: Listen, Joan. Ralph was my best friend. And for two years you and I have been meeting behind his back; we've been living this damnable lie. And he had trusted us together, Joan; he has always trusted us; he has made it easy for us. My God, it's—it's ghastly!

MRS. LOYALTY: Yes, it's ghastly.

CARR: Joan, in the secret book in which the histories of our lives are being written down, you will appear as an angel and I as a cad.

[*She makes to interrupt, tenderly.*]

Yes, that's how it has been these two years. You have been an angel, Joan. You have let yourself be tormented because you could not bear the idea of hurting Ralph.

MRS. LOYALTY: You see, dear, Ralph has always loved me so. He is a very simple man. And like all simple men, he is superstitious. He believes in marriage. And he has so needed my love, it has been his one support. That's why I haven't been able to face the idea of telling him that I couldn't stay married to him another minute. I couldn't face the idea of hurting him so deeply. But that does not make me an angel, Hugo—only a coward.

CARR: I've had a monopoly of cowardice in this thing, Joan, to take advantage of your goodness in not wanting to hurt Ralph. [*Eagerly, quickly.*] But it will be all right now. I'm going to tell Ralph to-night. Then everything will be all right.

MRS. LOYALTY [*as though to herself*]: Perhaps everything is all right as it is—as all right as anything will ever be. . . .

CARR: What's that, Joan? What did you say?

MRS. LOYALTY [*in magnificent, imperious impatience; often used by Frenchwomen in trying moments, but rare in less savage countries*]: What did I say? What does it matter what I said? What do we all say? What does it matter what we all say? Oh, dear, my *very* dear, we are all always saying something, discussing, wrangling, chattering—and what about? What does it matter? Where does it lead to?

CARR [*bewildered, and quite naturally*]: Yes, but——

MRS. LOYALTY: Discussing, discussing, discussing! [*She takes him closely.*] Our love, my sweet, has been one endless discussion. Should we do this—should we not do that? Oh, eternal, endless! And we are not very young any more, my Hugo! We must take love while we still have the fever; we must pluck love while it is still in flower!

[*Her love fascinates him, as always.*]

And so we will be just silent for these few minutes, just divinely silent and at peace—and for the first time in two years, dear, we just won't think of poor Ralph. . . .

[*They sit in silence, close together, his head against her shoulder, for is he not the weaker of the two? Until, of course, honour occurs to him.*]

CARR: But I must see Ralph to-night, dear; I simply *must.*

MRS. LOYALTY: Peace, peace! [*A pause.*] Later, dear, I will tell you something—something terrible.

CARR: Terrible!

MRS. LOYALTY: Later, later. . . . [*A pause.*] We comic, curious human beings who are so used to letting pleasure wait

upon our fears—shan't we, can't we, daren't we, for once, let our fears wait on our pleasure!

[*He takes her face between his hands, he kisses her, lost in love. There is a noise at the door.*]

CARR: Ralph!

[*But it is obviously one of those warning noises contrived by a discreet butler whose lot has been cast in an unhappy home and who quite understands.*]

MRS. LOYALTY [*very low*]: It can't be Ralph. . . .

[SMITH *enters, a dim, hesitating, agitated figure in the shadows by the door.*]

Yes, Smith? What is it?

[*Most uneasily* SMITH *comes forward towards the sofa.* CARR *stares at his agitation. This is a most bewildered Smith.*]

SMITH: Madam, I—I have just been in the study——

MRS. LOYALTY [*sharply*]: I understood, Smith, that Mr. Loyalty was not to be disturbed!

[SMITH, *poor Smith.*]

SMITH: Yes, madam. But as I passed the door I heard Mr. Loyalty's private telephone ringing—and ringing. As he did not appear to answer it I—I surmised that he must have gone out, and——

CARR [*puzzled to death*]: What *is* this, a cross-word puzzle?

SMITH: I went in, and—and——

CARR: And?

SMITH: Mr. Loyalty's dead.

[*There is no sound, no movement.* SMITH *plunges on.*]

His 'ead was laid across the writing-table and a little dark bottle empty by his hand——

CARR: My *God!*

SMITH: I shook 'im, but——

[CARR *jumps up from the sofa.* SMITH *continues, to his mistress. She is very still.*]

I have telephoned to Dr. Gay, madam. As he was out to dinner I asked his man to call him up to come here at once.

CARR [*somewhere in the room, a frantic shadow*]: God! Oh, God!

MRS. LOYALTY [*her lips scarcely moving*]: Thank you, Smith.

SMITH [*nervously, nicely—but then he is nice*]: I am very sorry indeed, madam.

[SMITH *walks out quickly.*]

[HUGO CARR *sweeps his arm round as though to ward off an intolerable thing—to find the thing too intolerable.*

[MRS. LOYALTY *watches him. She is very still, very white. He has never once met her eyes since Smith's entrance.*]

CARR: I never dreamt that he——

[*He cannot go on. He cannot bear the situation. Dishonour is devouring him. Suddenly she goes to him. Gentle, she is yet determined. She touches his shoulder, as though to rouse him from his too miserable trance.*]

MRS. LOYALTY: Hugo!

[*He looks at her. His eyes cling to her calmness.*]

HUGO: It's ghastly, Joan. Don't you see—how ghastly! Poor old Ralph—down there, all alone—while we up here——

MRS. LOYALTY: Yes. . . .

CARR: ——While we up here were making love—his best friend and his wife!

[*A pause.*]

MRS. LOYALTY: Poor, poor Ralph!

[HUGO CARR *suddenly tears himself away from her nearness. He is a priest, a priest in the temple of friendship.*]

CARR: There are some things——

[*The violence of his emotions almost paralyses him, but the eloquence of the damned urges him on.*]

—— There are some things that are unmentionable, unpardonable. There are some crimes that are nameless, because no word can express the evil that is in them——

MRS. LOYALTY [*helplessly*]: Oh, please, please. . . .

CARR: And there's no excuse for these crimes. God simply has not put enough excuses in the world to meet the crimes of the world——

MRS. LOYALTY [*pleading*]: Dear, we've committed no crime—we, so much in love, so fond!

CARR: No crime! Poor old Ralph down in that room, alone—betrayed—betrayed by his best friend and his wife—suspecting the betrayal—betrayed to death!

[*A pause. He continues with intense calmness.*]

Joan, we have killed Ralph; we who have quibbled for two years whether we would hurt his feelings or not! May God forgive us!

MRS. LOYALTY [*sharply*]: It's not fair to say we've killed him. It's not fair, and it's childish. Life killed him.

[*He stares at her, as though in awe of her reasonableness.*]

Listen, Hugo. If this mood of yours isn't met now, in this terrible moment, it may ruin our lives——

CARR: *May* ruin! And isn't this ruin now?

MRS. LOYALTY: Oh, why won't you face the truth? Why won't you see that this is the culminating point of three ruined lives, and that now, on the ruins of three lives, we must build a city for two?

[*He is in no state to build cities. She pleads.*]

Oh, it won't be a very fair city, Hugo; but it will be ours, our very own city by right, by the only real right in this wrong world—the right of suffering!

[*He stares at her; in awe of her.*]

CARR: But . . . aren't you sorry—for Ralph?

MRS. LOYALTY: Sorry! [*She laughs.*] You dare to ask me if I am sorry! Oh, Hugo, is it absolutely necessary for the love of a man for a woman to be expressed in idiotic questions?

CARR [*sulkily*]: I don't know what you mean.

MRS. LOYALTY: Dear God, what kind of a thing is this love, that it can trick a mind into loving a man!

[*She turns to him again, to talk reasonably.*]

You ask me if I am sorry—I who have lived through a hell of boredom for eight years so as not to hurt Ralph's feelings, not to break his heart! And now at last it's broken—he's dead. Yes, I am sorry. Frightfully sorry.

[*He stares at her, as one transfixed.*]

And I am also glad. I feel as though I myself had died and that my soul had been freed from a long imprisonment. That is exactly what I felt, as though it was a miserable part of *me* that was dead, when I saw him down there——

CARR [*gaping*]: When you *saw* him!

MRS. LOYALTY: For Heaven's sake, Hugo, don't gape at me like that! I've already had more than I can bear to-night.

CARR [*helplessly*]: But I don't understand! When you *saw* him . . .

MRS. LOYALTY: That's why I looked frightened when you came in so suddenly. I thought it was a ghost—his ghost. I'd gone down to the study to fetch a book—and I saw him—like that.

[*Her eyes plead with him, her hands feverishly interlocked.*]

Didn't I tell you I had something to tell you later—something terrible? I was going to tell you later; I was preparing for it. . . .

CARR [*queerly*]: You were reading when I came in.

[*He accuses her, his whole being accuses her. She is made helpless by her love for him.*]

What kind of a woman are you, Joan Loyalty? What kind of a soul is in that body—what kind of a heart? You can sit here letting me make love to you while you know that poor Ralph is dead downstairs—dead by his own hand because he loved a woman who had only desire for a soul, and only a void instead of a heart.

MRS. LOYALTY [*a despairing cry*]: Hugo!

[*But she has become horrible to him. He is a man of honour. As she makes to touch him, he sweeps her away with a blind gesture of his arm and strides out of the room.*

At first she cannot realize that he has gone. She stares blindly, unseeing, at the door.]

MRS. LOYALTY: Hugo! Hugo!

[*But even as her despair calls upon his name the front door downstairs is heard to slam. She is distraught, powerless to control the moment. Through the windows the noise of footsteps is heard receding. She paces about the room frantically. She is somewhere near the sofa, perhaps behind the sofa, when a figure occurs in the door, a dark figure in the shadow of the doorway. She catches a scream to her mouth with the back of her hand.*

MR. LOYALTY *comes forward.*]

LOYALTY [*calmly, almost casually*]: So he's gone, has he? I thought so!

[*Earlier in the evening, if you remember, this gentleman had been reading an evening paper. That evening paper is still in existence, sprawling on an armchair, in a state of crumpled helplessness at*

being unable to report the astounding events it has witnessed. MR. LOYALTY *picks it up, opens it, and stands glancing at it, in exactly the same position as when the curtain rose.*

MRS. LOYALTY, *bewildered, astonished, almost fainting, stares at him across the room.*]

MRS. LOYALTY: Ralph! *Ralph!*

LOYALTY [*looking up*]: Well?

MRS. LOYALTY: But you were dead!

LOYALTY: Never more alive in my life. [*Lowers the paper.*] Look here, Joan, don't let's get dramatic about this. It was just a plot to prevent you making a silly ass of yourself. I mean, I'm quite fond of you, even though you *are* my wife. And I always knew Hugo Carr was yellow. I just wanted you to see him as he really is, that's all. [*With a sigh of relief.*] Well, that's over! [*Looking at the paper again.*] There's a woman here trying to swim the channel again. You know, I've always said that the only way to keep these women at home is to have bigger and better channels.

[*Very suddenly* MRS. LOYALTY *sweeps across the room.*]

MRS. LOYALTY: Excuse me, dear.

[*He stares at her. She kisses him tenderly on the forehead.*]

I've just realized that there are worse things than being married to a fool.

[LOYALTY *throws the paper away, his face beaming.*]

LOYALTY: You darling!

[*They stand facing each other, the two hands of each clasped, laughing at each other. And so:*

[CURTAIN.]

Home-made History

By HANSARD WATT

No. 1.—CARACTACUS

I

CARACTACUS was born and bred
A warrior from heel to head,
And fighting was his function;
He lived—as near as I can say—
Within that region, which to-day
Is known as Clapham Junction.

II

'Twas then a wild and "blasted heath"
(The phrase is borrowed from "Macbeth,"
In short—is a quotation)
And wombats wandered after dark
Where now the guileless city clerk
Hies homeward from the station.

III

Caractacus's aim and end
Was, first and foremost, to defend
Those chill suburban regions
From the encroachment of the race
Of Romans, who beset the place,
And wandered round in legions.

IV

Not theirs the Cook-conducted band,
Who came in peace to view the land
For holiday enjoyment;
They came to burn, and bend, and break,
And take what things there were to take
—Their usual employment.

V

The natives, fearful of restraint,
Assumed an extra coat of paint
By way of war-like suiting;
And, valour flashing from their eyes,
They thronged the heights of Clapham Rise,
And those of Upper Tooting.

VI

Caractacus was in command
Of this irate, intrepid band,
And, bent upon succeeding,
He led his troops, he led the way,
He led whatever—so to say—
Demanded any leading.

VII

But though he fought with tireless skill
For upwards of a week—until
His strength completely failed him;
'Tis very sad, but very true,
He somehow failed to muddle through,
And Rome, triumphant, nailed him!

VIII

I'm proud to state that it was found
(When the survivors searched the ground),
And proved beyond disputing,
For every Briton that was slain,
Some seven Romans still remain
Beneath the turf of Tooting.

VIEWPOINTS——

From "The Widow's Cruise"

BY JOAN TEMPLE

[As played at the Ambassador's Theatre, London.]

"NOTHING labels one's period so clearly as one's mental attitude."

"You can't forget a man who's hurt you."

"People boast that they are married in the eyes of God, as an excuse for not being married in the eyes of men."

"Be a big enough fool and you'll always get some man to love and protect you.'

"There's no one more unnatural than the 'natural' woman. A woman is always an actress, or she's too masculine to be worth a man's consideration."

"What *is* a scandal? An evil that is known to others besides those intimately concerned."

"This younger generation! It is so intolerant! So cruel! The least sign of weakness and they'll smash you—ruthlessly. No one seems to want to be kind nowadays."

". . . men are shy animals really, and if they feel a woman is ready to sacrifice them to her wit, their dislike is in proportion to their fear."

"You get a man's real opinion of you when you quarrel with him. What a lot of lies mere politeness seems to entail."

"I'm not clever, but at least I'm possessed of a stupidity that gropes after something outside itself. There's salvation in that, remember."

"Punishment doesn't legalize the crime, unfortunately."

"Oh, *why* should a woman always be expected to play the chameleon with her soul—just to keep some man—'interested'?"

"The wife who regards marriage as an easy-chair is heading straight for the Divorce Courts."

"A husband is too damnably handicapped to appreciate his wife—or anything else but his own shackles."

"I don't know whether it's a sign of rapidly advancing age, but the conversation of the present-day *jeune fille* sometimes makes me stagger."

"I always thought that a great war was won on the playing fields of Eton. My mistake. Nowadays it's won by intensive card-indexing."

"You may not know how quickly mutual poverty destroys a man's passion. There comes a moment when the back view of the same old hat, with the same old feather, can turn one's thoughts towards murder."

"I'll own no man my friend who takes me seriously."

"We're none of us 'nice people,' come down to brass tacks. Psycho-analysis teaches us that, and justifies the Bible . . . the Bible indicates the existence of 'Original Sin'—and Psycho-analysis shows pretty clearly its exact location in the human complex."

"Everybody knows that the woman who grouses has only herself to blame."

"A woman who's happily married seeks the admiration of other men in order to lay it as a tribute at her loving husband's feet. The woman who's unhappily married seeks admiration as a salve to her wounded vanity."

Black Mane

A woman's terrifying ordeal in the wilderness

By VINGIE E. ROE

IT was June in the Thunder Country. The stark peaks lifted into the serene blue heavens ragged and unfriendly. Seen from a distance they discouraged investigation. None, beholding, would have dreamed of their deep-cut cañons where the living waters chuckled, of their jealously guarded meadows sweet with grass, of their tree-filled cups and pockets.

It was a lone land, indeed, given over to denizens of the wild and without lure for humans. No gold hid in its crevasses, its small rich flats were too far from human marts to attract the tiller of the soil. To the west and south, under the frown of its ramparts, there spread out for many weary miles a stretch of desert, grey and waterless, while to north and east its own jumbled slants and crags, cañons and peaks seemed rising limitlessly towards the rising sun.

A wild country, solemn with solitude, still with the unplumbed silence of the wilderness, majestically beautiful, it lay in its blue and golden light, a paradise. And it had its complex life; its timid ones, for ever on the watch, its grim hunters and its wanton killers. Wapistan, the marten, and Sakwasew, the mink, fished in its still pools and hunted the unwary. Coyotes sat on the high ridges and yapped to the stars at night. Two golden eagles nested each year under the crown of Castle Rock, and a wolf or two lived in the caves by The Spire. Old Crunch Jaws, the panther, patrolled a vast range, and Creeper, his mate, watched unnumbered hours, stretched on some arching limb or lying like a tawny shadow on some scarce less tawny rock.

And Thunder Country had its king.

This was Black Mane, gorgeous to behold, soured on the world, savage and dominant, hoof and tooth set against every living creature.

Black Mane, the lawless, the charging, screaming overlord of all the Thunder Country, hated and feared by every living thing.

Even Crunch Jaws had been known to give ground and fall back snarling with fury before that rushing charge. And old Sagg Skin, the huge she-bear who had thought to stem it once, had been sent rolling like a ball down into the stream below. She had dragged a broken hip, from which handicap she had nearly perished; but hers was the only brand that Black Mane ever carried—three claw marks like a trident that had cut to the bone on his right shoulder.

Black Mane was the most beautiful thing—if one exempted the majestic peaks themselves—that the sun of Thunder Country shone upon.

In the sounding cañons and upon the trackless crags there was no other horse by which to compare him. Had there been, his abnormal height, his depth of barrel, his breadth of chest, his length and circumference of leg would have been apparent. As it was he stalked about his domain, a huge engine of dread.

Black Mane was young—not more than five years old, if one might judge by the look of him. His hide was the colour of pale gold, that soft, fine metal called "white gold," and it shone like satin where the light struck. His shining hoofs were black as jet, and so was the amazing cloud of mane that tossed on his arching neck, parted down the centre and fell on each side. It was this angry looking cloud that gave him such added ferocity of appearance.

With every cat-like movement of his supple body it waved and lifted, shook and billowed like a warrior's crest. From the base of it there ran down his short-coupled back to the root of the jetty tail that swept his heels a sharp black stripe. His velvet nose was black, and so were the great eyes that shone in his golden face; also his four fleet legs as high as the knees and hocks.

When he stood on some high point of cliff and surveyed the world below he was a sight for men and gods. But no man had ever set eyes upon him.

On a sweet, warm day in spring Tragedy, full-fledged, strode into the Thunder Country. Crept, rather, for the poor nag that had so faithfully encompassed the desert and the killing miles from civilization staggered into the first sweet defile where the silver waters flowed, drank to heavenly repletion, sighed with ineffable peace, and laid down and died—and the woman he had carried was afoot. She, too, had laid her face eagerly to the stream, but human reason stayed her lips.

For a long dull hour she sat huddled in against the cooling flanks with her head on the still side. He had been a good little chap, and she had loved him as much as her dead heart could love. Scant tears squeezed from beneath her lids and trickled among the desert dust on her cheeks. The garments on her thin body were worn and had been poor at the beginning. She wore stout boots, and a man's sombrero had covered her head with its dusty brown hair. She was not beautiful, but there had been, in some happier day of her not far back youth, a slim prettiness about her, a beauty of the inner spirit. This was still apparent in the depth and clarity of the big blue eyes that lighted her haggard face, though the light was one of dry agony.

The mouth beneath backed the eyes, for it was so sensitive that the corners could not be still, but twitched from time to time.

At the end of the hour she rose stiffly and pulled the saddle from the dead horse. This was no slight task and took her a long time. When it was done she stood back and surveyed her possessions and her environment. Of the former there was pitifully little—the saddle, an old rifle that was almost useless, since it did not shoot straight, one good blanket and a goodly roll of hardtack, jerky and salt. Of the latter there was all of Thunder Country, limitless, wild, and peopled with loneliness.

At the effect of it upon her dulled consciousness she spread her hands in a hopeless gesture.

"What do I expect of Gethsemane?" she said aloud. "Help me, God!"

It was an old cry, that last.

For nine days it had been on her lips without cessation.

For nine days her benumbed brain had wept and supplicated and been denied all comfort.

She dragged the precious things up along the wall of the cañon, looking for any sort of cave or overhanging rock that might afford a bit of shelter. She was afraid of Thunder Country. That was plain in the furtive glances which she cast here and there, in the dilation of her big blue eyes, in the halting step, the hurried dart forward, the tug at the saddle, the grip on the old gun. The belt at her wai t was full of shells, and presently she dropped the saddle, worked the lever of the gun to make sure it was loaded, felt the precious cartridges, and again went on. She left the saddle at last and walked faster up the narrow defile beside the singing stream. It was high noon, and she knew that the sun would go down early in the mountains. Therefore she must find shelter of a sort. For two hours she walked, to come out at last in one of the little meadows where the big trees stood and where the grass was sweet and fresh. All around its outer edge she went, searching feverishly. She knew there must be caves in such a rock-ribbed land, and she was right. At the meadow's head she found what she desired, a shallow cave beneath a frowning stone, and here she put her bundle and built her a fire.

Fire. That was her shield, her precious magic of the wild.

With fire before her she would be safe at night, for the animals were afraid of fire.

When it was going, and the priceless match box safe in a buttoned pocket, she hurried about the meadow and brought in a great heap of dead branches. There were many of these beneath the mush oak trees, for Thunder Country was a country of storms at certain seasons. So she made her fire small to hold till night. At the fall of the dark twilight she set it glowing and cowered in behind it, a poor little figure in all truth, with her scared blue eyes and the strange agony on her face, with her hushed breath and her bad gun on her knees.

Thus she sat and waited, for what she did not know.

From time to time she laid a dead branch on the flame, drowsed and waked, and drowsed again, to sit up with a catch of horror in her throat and search the night beyond her little beacon.

"Forgive me, God," she whispered between lapses. "Oh, forgive me, God!"

And that very first night, from far up on the rim-rock of Ecco Mountain, Black Mane saw that fire, the first of its kind in

his experience. He stood like a statue, his great head up in the darkness, his mad eyes flaming with interest, his nostrils flaring as he tried to suck in upon the wind some hint of what it was.

But the wind was from another quarter, and he got nothing.

It was not so far away as the crow flies, but far and bye by way of the sounding passes.

At dawn the woman slept, fallen forward across her rifle, with the dead fire a black spot on the earth. When she awaked with a start the sun was in her face and she saw how she had been unguarded in the dark.

" Lord, dear Lord," she prayed, with her sad eyes on the glorious skies, " hear Thou my voice, and help me not to do that again ! Yet what am I that I should be preserved ? Deal with me as Thou seest fit ; and yet, oh, my Father, I did not mean to do it.

" Thou, who lookest upon the heart must know. I did not mean ! I did not mean ! "

She crept from her scant shelter, bathed her swollen face in the near-by stream, and scanned her world for comfort. There was comfort in it, though it was holden from her eyes—the darting shadows in the pools that were trout, the abundant fuel, the bushes that gave promise of berries. It was going to take her long to see the open hand of Thunder Country held out to her, she who had never been alone in all her life, but she was game. She tried to see, to calculate. She ate carefully of her scant provisions, wondered how long they would last. And, even so early in the day, she set about getting a huge supply of the dry branches.

But the days are long when one is absolutely alone between the earth and sky ; and there was something on this woman's heart.

It enveloped her whole entity like a tragic mantle.

And presently it showed itself, for she set about and built her an altar of stones on the level flat before her cave. On the top of the crude thing she placed a cross made with infinite patience from sticks and a string from her blanket. And before it she knelt at last, her hands clasped and hanging before her, her thin face, with its dark-ringed eyes, upturned to the serene blue skies.

Out of her burdened soul she poured her agony, and it would have been amazing had there been one to hear, for she confessed herself a murderess !

Over and over she pleaded for grace on her ruined soul, besought divine mercy for forgiveness. The golden hours of the sweet June day drew idly by and the sun stood overhead before she rose from her supplication—and the tragedy was not one whit abated on her face.

She built her fire again and made herself a brew of tea in the one small pot her pack had carried, ate sparingly of the jerky, and drooped at her cave mouth.

Before her the gorgeous world of Thunder Country spread out in beauty, green and still, save for the voice of waters—that most blessed music after the sound of winds in trees—its jumbled peaks edging the turquoise sky, its cañons deep with shadows. It should have soothed the soul distressed, have held out protecting arms to the fugitive, but the lone woman was afraid of it.

Afraid to the last atom of her being.

And yet outside of it there was more fear.

II

ABOVE in the soft blue heavens there was terror thrice refined—the angry justice of an outraged God.

So she was accursed of all the world, here and hereafter, and the tremble of her poor lips was the last word in pathos—lost on the wilderness.

Out of Thunder Country she could never go. And how long she could survive there she did not know.

But she must not die until she had gotten God's forgiveness, had so purged her soul by prayer and supplication that He in His mercy and wisdom must forgive.

Only forgiveness ! If she could feel its blessed waters flow on her heart how serenely would she fold her tired hands and give up her tortured spirit ! But not till then ! Not till then !

A very fever of survival seized her, and she fought for preservation like the keenest lover of life. She did not let her fire go out again, for she learned how to make it deep and heavy to hold the live coals over. She slept behind it at last, though more than once she heard the coyotes yapping, and in the dead of a cool night old Crunch Jaws sent his kill-call screaming to the stars. She sat up then with a cold sweat pouring from her every limb, and clutched the old gun desperately. But Crunch Jaws was not after her. He had seen her several times in the week she had been there, had puzzled

over her, but he did not like the scent of her fire nor the sound of her strange, hoarse voice.

This eagerness to live took hold on the woman and she became cunning. With threads pulled from her blanket and twisted she made her a line. With a pin she fashioned a hook. There were insects in the meadow grass, and in the mornings and the evenings she flung the strange collection on the breast of the pools behind the rocks, and the fish, hitherto undisturbed and unwary, leaped at it with gusto. After the fashion of the aborigine she hung them on green twigs in the smoke of her fire to dry —and went on her knees before her altar.

" How could I help it, Lord ? " she would wail, wringing her hands. " I struck—but to protect myself. Should I have let him work his will of me ? Was that better than blood upon my soul ? I did not mean to—kill, Father ; only to drive him from me. Should I have let him come—around the table ? "

So she wrestled with her problem, as many another human soul has done, and there was no glory in the high blue skies nor beauty in the smiling land. She dug for roots to eat, drank from the stream, and —prayed.

Over and over she reviewed her drab life —the years of sewing in a little Western town, with never a break nor an adventure until the one terrible night when she looked up from her lonely meal to confront the stranger in her lonely cottage. The stranger with the ugly eyes and leering mouth. The man who had grinned across at her and made the first obscene speech she had ever heard. She could see him now, had seen him every waking hour since—the unkempt head with its shock of hair, the week's beard, the unspeakable mouth with the stained teeth. She could hear his vile chuckle as he said, " Why you live so fur from neighbours ? "

The modest cottage, that accorded with her narrow purse, was detached somewhat.

" Maybe you like comp'ny, eh ? An' don't want 'em near ? "

And then—then—the memory tightened her throat with a fog of fear even now, nearly three weeks later—he had reached for her—reached for her across the table, set with its scant meal, with a word that made his meaning clear. And she—here she must put up a hand and rub that swelling throat —she had risen like one in a dream, stumbled backward over her fallen chair, grasped the heavy old glass pitcher that had held her milk, and with both hands and the strength of deadly terror flung it up over her head and down forward.

The thick butt of it had crashed full into that leering face—and she had heard the crunch of bone ! Would she ever forget it ?

Nights in her cave she woke with screams, remembering.

She could see the hideous face as it stayed wavering for a moment before it slid down beneath the table rim, grinning with its evil intent that merged so swiftly into a great surprise and then into blankness. It was the first time in her life that she had seen Death reach out and brand a countenance. That had been all—that and the trembling escape from the cottage, the finding of the stranger's horse standing patiently in the dark, saddled and bearing just the stores that she had brought with her into Thunder Country. She had mounted and turned his head blindly towards the desert country at the north, running from that heap under the table. She gave no thought to her hitherto blameless life, to her townspeople, who would undoubtedly weigh the circumstantial evidence of the stranger in her house, to her word that she had struck in self-defence. She, who had been so dull a mouse in their midst, had killed a man, and that thought rode her mind to the exclusion of all else. She took the crime in its literal light.

Therefore she was here, alone in the great wilderness, striving to absolve her blood-stained soul.

And up on the higher plateau beyond the climbing cañons Black Mane, the killer, saw her beacon fires, drew their faint smoke into his flaring nostrils and stamped with new anger.

Mystery drew him like a magnet, and he turned his savage face, with its rolling dark eyes beneath the cloud of mane, down the rock-walled cuts towards that distant meadow.

He passed down slowly through winding defiles, grazed lazily in the green patches, drank often from spring and stream, and watched always from his big dark eyes for something he might charge. He found little enough to test his fighting mettle, for all the denizens of Thunder Country gave him a wide berth. And so by easy stages, but surely, the killer came from his heights to find him a new foe, to see what manner of

creature smelt of dead wood and looked like the meteors that sometimes flamed a spectacular moment in the night heavens.

While the poor creature who meant all this to Black Mane still built her fires, ate of her scant stores and prayed unceasingly before her altar of stones.

III

SO it was that on a day when the warm light flooded the world with beauty and a little wind made ineffable sweetness of every breath, she opened her dull eyes, from which the tears were slowly dripping, and ceased in the midst of her supplication.

At the cañon's mouth Black Mane stood like a statue, his silver-gold hide shining in circles where the light struck, his proud head up and blowing, his black-lined ears pointed sharply, and standing above him in the draught of wind that sucked up the cut the awesome cloud that gave him the look of a demon.

He stood in astonishment, beholding his first human and the things that surround humans—duffel, fire and smoke.

No less astonished was the woman on her knees. She looked instinctively beyond the horse, expecting men and—the Law. But there was nothing save the splendid animal, and presently the breath that had been holden in her throat let go. Unsteadily she rose, went impetuously around the altar and stretched out her thin arms towards him, so glad was she to see another living thing in the solitudes.

"Beautiful!" she cried out. "Oh, beautiful!"

But the next instant she dropped the reaching hands and horror blanched her face, for Back Mane, his wonder broken by the sound of the strange voice, struck once on the earth with a huge forefoot, leaned forward, his head lowering on his stretching neck, and charged.

Like an engine he came across the level flat, screaming as he came. For a perilous moment the woman was too scared to move.

Then, just in the nick of time, she flung herself backward over the fire and rolled into the low mouth of the cave. She saw the open mouth and gleaming teeth as Black Mane reached for her.

Then she flattened herself to the farther wall and listened to his rage as he squealed and pounded where she had stood a moment back. At last, after what seemed to her a century of horror, she heard his thunderin; hoofs beating down the flat. Not for an hour of perfect silence did she move. Then, like a frightened kitten, she crept to the cave's lip and looked. Looked at the wreck of her pitiful home place, for the coals of her precious fire were scattered and dead, her blanket was riddled to strings, and—grave omen to her surcharged soul!—the makeshift altar had been pounded into bits.

For a long, long time she looked upon the devastation, dully, with a strange hopelessness. Then she covered her face with her hands and began to cry with the deep, heavy sobs of abandoned grief.

"I am answered, God!" she wept at last. "Damned! Damned! Of body and soul! I will trouble Thee no more!"

And she rolled back into her cave without a thought of fire to protect her from the things of night.

Deep in the defile Black Mane stood and shook his great head from side to side. The parted cloud on his neck rolled wickedly with the motion. He stood and seemed to think of what he had left in the meadow. Sometimes he looked back that way beyond the intervening rocks. Once he took a few tentative steps that way, stiff-legged, his tail a trifle lifted at the base.

Then he changed his mind, and going a little farther down, fell to cropping the sweet grass in a tiny flat. But all that day he stopped from time to time, and tossing up his head, listened for the strange voice that he had heard just as he charged.

A strange, strange sound it had been, like nothing he had ever heard—more liquid than the flowing waters, more soft than Creeper's whimper to the kits that she hid each year in the cave on Stony.

At dawn he stood once more at the cañon's mouth and looked across the flat, and his savage eyes were filled with a different light, a curiosity, a desire to see again what he had seen before, the creature that stood upright like old Sagg Skin, yet smelled far, far sweeter. That scent came to him now, the scent of strange flesh whose like he did not know, whose like was not in Thunder Country

Turning, he went back down his defile, but he stopped now and then, forefoot lifted, listening.

For two days the fugitive lay against the cave's back wall trying to die. Then nature

drove her out, a scarecrow of a woman, to gnaw at the strings of jerky and to creep in terror to the stream to drink. Each cup of the hills, each shadow of tree seemed to hold that awful engine of destruction. She peered with wide purple eyes here and there, straining her ears. She drank and ran, stumbling in her haste, back to the shelter of the cave.

That night she heard Crunch Jaws screaming on the rim-rock and shivered in her abandonment.

She ventured out again at dawn with her string and hook.

Crunch Jaws, passing under the rim-rock, saw her and noted the slowness of her gait, her seeming weariness. His yellow eyes glowed and brightened. Though she was strange meat to him, she would be an easy kill. He was full that day, however, and went his way.

The woman caught seven fish in a matter of four minutes, but she could not eat them raw. With fear and trembling she built a tiny fire and set them to roast thereby, herself crouching warily at the cave's mouth.

Late in the afternoon she looked up—to behold the awful head of Black Mane peering around the rocks at the cañon's lip!

Before he could charge she was under her stone and in. And she heard him slide to a stop without, to blow and rumble in his throat.

The days that followed were worse than torture—they were nightmare intensified. If she went to the stream she heard him blow in the cañon. Did she try for insects to cast for the fish she saw him coming like a wind up along the meadow. From behind stones and the round bodies of the trees the great horse watched her, and she screamed sometimes with the dread and the tension.

Once in the middle of a wondrous moonlight night she opened her eyes and saw the silver face with its wild, dark eyes hanging in the opening below the shielding stone of her cave. Though she knew he could not reach her, she fell to whimpering with fear, a soft, low cry that was wordlessly pitiful.

And Black Mane uttered a sound in answer that none in Thunder Country had ever heard—a fluttering sound that came from deep in his mighty chest. Then he was gone, and she lay and sweated till the daylight came. That day saw the finish of the jerky and the salt. It saw also the finish of her fortitude. Neither nature nor life could ask that she try longer. She was done.

Therefore, without a prayer, without remorse, in a sort of weak defiance she went out in the open straight to the heart of the meadow. She raised her voice and called, as she had once called a half-forgotten pony of her distant girlhood, though this time she called King Death.

And swift as wind came answer—the ring of hoofs on the rock of the cañon bed, and Black Mane the killer shot forth like a bolt. She folded her arms on her breast and closed her eyes—and called. She heard the thunder of the mighty feet, felt the tremble of the earth. . . . The walls of the mountains seemed to circle, the sunlight faded from her darkened eyes. . . . She began falling—a long distance, down on feathery cushions of air.

IV

TO strange sounds she opened her senses—the high snarls of a cat. But what cat had ever such volume of voice?

The thunder of charging hoofs that went like a torrent and came back like parade. She opened her eyes—to look up at a silver face with a tossing black cloud above it and two luminous eyes that were wildly eager. A flaring nostril nudged her breast, drew in the scent of her. The great head lifted, the ears laid back, the eyes glared lambent flame, and once again the mad hoofs roared away. From higher up in the rocks she heard the panther yell in rage.

In astonishment too great for thought she rose on an elbow and looked—at as wonderful a play as she would ever see. Crunch Jaws, lashing his tail and reaching down the rock with wicked claws to slap at his ancient enemy, who stood below with snapping teeth, Black Mane the killer! While she looked the awful thing came trotting back towards her, stopping now and then to look back at the panther, to lean towards him, to threaten.

And directly over her prostrate form he stood and sniffed her over from head to heel. He turned beside her and watched the panther, as a mother mare defends the colt behind her.

She was whole, sound, untouched by hoof or tooth!

Holding her breath, she rose unsteadily, and the stallion moved his haunch to give her lurching room. Without fear or care she put a hand on his rump for steadiness, the first human touch he had ever known —and Black Mane only watched Crunch Jaws.

Utterly uncaring, she moved towards the cave, and Black Mane shouldered her, whinnied in his throat with exactly that coaxing flutter the mare gives to the tottering colt.

What had caused the strange situation she did not know nor care. None would ever know, save perhaps that curious old dame, Nature, who has made the beasts in some part to love the humans

At any rate, Black Mane had not killed her. He followed at her shoulder and hated Crunch Jaws on his rock.

And then, all suddenly, as the light must have blinded Saul of Tarsus on that historic day when he fared upon a Galilean road, a lost and wicked man, so a light fell inward on her spirit and illumined all the world.

She fell upon her knees amid the ruins of her altar, and under Black Mane's bending neck, with the terrible jaws an inch from her lifted face, she cried aloud to her God in ecstasy.

" A sign ! " she cried, " a sign ! A sign ! When I was lost and ready to die Thou didst deliver me ! When I would have left the earth Thou didst give me pardon ! Forgiveness ! Oh, my Father, it laves my soul like many waters ! I am made clean and whole ! "

And she wept on her knees, with the tears running on her white face upturned to the serene blue heavens, her hands clasped before her.

From far up under the rim-rock Crunch Jaws yelled again, a sound of baffled anger, and Black Mane raised his giant head and screamed defiance, to fall once more to nudging the strange thing under his neck— the strange thing that he needs must follow and protect.

Another spring was on the world. On a far north prairie, where a squalid town seemed nailed to the flat land and the scent of daisies came from the blowing grass beyond, a woman was preaching in the street.

She was a little woman with soft brown hair and big purple-blue eyes that seemed to know all the sorrow in the world, and her thin face was tanned from innumerable days of riding in the wind and sun. She was known over a thousand miles of range land as Preacher Kate, and she had saved more souls, eased more spiritual despair than any contemporary of the cloth in all the distant towns.

She always preached from her saddle, and there was but one thing on earth that she would not have given up to that service, one thing that she held inviolate as her own.

This was the horse she rode, a great silver-gold stallion, powerful, spirited, none too kind of nature, whose dark eyes rolled suspiciously at all the world, and whose splendid black mane tossed on his neck and parted down the centre.

At Black Mane's feet many a hardened sinner had given up his sins, many a scoffer had broken under the fire of Preacher Kate's conviction, for she preached the doctrine of forgiveness in its entirety.

This night two men and a woman, a haggard Hagar of the prairie, sought vainly for the light, and finally the woman tossed her arms and cried that it was too late.

But here the fire began to play in Preacher Kate's blue eyes, and she seemed to flame before them, a Daniel in her certain faith.

" Too late ! " she cried, standing in her stirrups. " Why, friends, the thieves were saved at the eleventh hour, when the bells of doom were ringing. Unforgivable sin ? There is none ! God's breast is for His children, black as they may be with the dregs of sin, the slime of evil-doing. I myself was on bedrock, under all the waters of condemnation, and I came clear through His divine mercy, the cleansing of Christ's blood."

And the woman broke and began to weep, the two men knelt, and, while the gas jet flared above, the miracle was wrought and they arose transfigured.

An hour later Preacher Kate rode away across the shadowed prairie in the night. Lonely miles stretched out before her, but she knew no fear. The friendly stars were over her, the soft winds blew from the south, and under her were the creak of her saddle, the sliding of the muscles in Black Mane's mighty shoulder, the music of his hoofs upon the plain.

She was due next day at a far-distant settlement upon her Master's business, and she was tenderly happy and at peace.

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RULES.

1. Entries should be written in ink, or typed, on one side of the paper only, the three sections fastened securely together, and the name and address of the sender marked on the top right-hand corner of *each section,* accompanied by the coupon on page 12 of the ARGOSY. They should be sent folded in foolscap envelopes addressed to: "Competition," c/o The Editor, ARGOSY, Cassell & Co., Ltd., La Belle Sauvage, E.C.4, to arrive not later than June 21, 1926.
2. No responsibility can be accepted for any entry lost, delayed, or mislaid. Proof of posting will not be regarded as proof of delivery or receipt. Entries cannot be returned.
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5. No correspondence can be entered into.

COUPON ON PAGE 12.

A Work of Art

The comedy of an unwanted gift

By ANTON TCHEHOV

This story does not bear the trace of morbid realism generally found in the work of Russian authors. It is a brilliant but delicate piece of humour by a writer who stands in the front rank of the world's best story-tellers.

SASHA SMIRNOV, the only son of his mother, holding under his arm something wrapped up in No. 223 of the *Financial Times*, assumed a sentimental expression, and went into Dr. Koshelkov's consulting-room.

"Ah, dear lad!" was how the doctor greeted him. "Well! how are we feeling?"

Sasha blinked, laid his hand on his heart and said, in an agitated voice: "Mamma sends her greetings to you, Ivan Nikolaevitch, and told me to thank you. . . . I am the only son of my mother and you have saved my life . . . you have brought me through a dangerous illness and . . . we do not know how to thank you."

"Nonsense, lad!" said the doctor, highly delighted, "I only did what anyone else would have done in my place."

"I am the only son of my mother . . . we are poor people and cannot, of course, repay you, and . . . we are quite ashamed, doctor, although, however, mamma and I . . . the only son of my mother, earnestly beg you to accept in token of our gratitude . . . this object, which. . . . An object of great value, an antique bronze. . . ."

"You shouldn't!" said the doctor, frowning. "What's this for?"

"No, please do not refuse," Sasha went on, muttering as he unpacked the parcel. "You will wound mamma and me by refusing. . . . It's a fine thing . . . an antique bronze. . . . It was left us by my deceased father and we have kept it as a precious souvenir. My father used to buy antique bronzes and sell them to connoisseurs. . . . Mamma and I keep on the business now. . . ."

Sasha undid the object and put it solemnly on the table. It was not a very tall candelabra of old bronze and artistic workmanship. It consisted of a group: on the pedestal stood two female figures in the costume of Eve, and in attitudes for the description of which I have neither the courage nor the fitting temperament. The figures were smiling coquettishly and altogether looked as though, had it not been for the necessity of supporting the candlestick, they would have skipped off the pedestal and have indulged in an orgy such as is improper for the reader even to imagine.

Looking at the present, the doctor slowly scratched behind his ear.

"Yes, it certainly is a fine thing," he muttered, "but . . . how shall I express it? . . . it's . . . h'm . . . it's not quite for family reading."

"What a strange way of looking at art, doctor!" said Sasha, offended. "Why, it is an artistic thing, look at it! There is so much beauty and elegance that it fills one's soul with a feeling of reverence and brings a lump into one's throat! When one sees anything so beautiful one forgets everything earthly. . . ."

"I understand all that very well, my dear boy," the doctor interposed, "but you know I am a family man, my children run in here, ladies come in."

"Of course, if you look at it from the point of view of the crowd," said Sasha, "then this exquisitely artistic work may appear in a certain light. . . . But, doctor, rise superior to the crowd, especially as you will wound mamma and me by refusing it. I am the only son of my mother, you have saved my life. . . . We are giving you the thing most precious to us and . . . and I only regret that I have not the pair to present to you. . . ."

"Thank you, my dear fellow, I am very grateful. . . . Give my respects to your mother, but really, consider, my children run in here, ladies come. . . . However, let it remain!"

"And there is nothing to argue about," said Sasha, relieved. "Put the candlestick

here, by this vase. What a pity we have not the pair to it! It is a pity! Well, good-bye, doctor."

After Sasha's departure the doctor looked for a long time at the candelabra, scratched behind his ear and meditated.

"It's a superb thing, there's no denying it," he thought, "and it would be a pity to throw it away. . . . But it's impossible for me to keep it. . . . H'm! . . . Here's a problem! To whom can I make a present of it, or to what charity can I give it?"

After long meditation he thought of his good friend, the lawyer Uhov, to whom he was indebted for the management of legal business.

"Excellent," the doctor decided, "it would be awkward for him as a friend to take money from me, and it will be very suitable for me to present him with this. I will take him the devilish thing! Luckily he is a bachelor and easy-going."

Without further procrastination the doctor put on his hat and coat took the candelabra and went off to Uhov's.

"How are you, friend!" he said, finding the lawyer at home. "I've come to see you . . . to thank you for your efforts. . . . You won't take money so you must, at least, accept this thing here. . . . See, my dear fellow. . . . The thing is magnificent!"

On seeing the bronze the lawyer was moved to indescribable delight.

"What a specimen!" he chuckled. "Ah, deuce take it, to think of them imagining such a thing, the devils! Exquisite! Ravishing! Where did you get hold of such a delightful thing?"

After pouring out his ecstasies the lawyer looked timidly towards the door and said: "Only you must carry off your present, my boy. . . . I can't take it. . . ."

"Why?" cried the doctor, disconcerted.

"Why . . . because my mother is here at times, my clients . . . besides, I should be ashamed for my servants to see it."

"Nonsense! Nonsense! Don't you dare to refuse!" said the doctor, gesticulating. "It's priggish of you! It's a work of art! . . . What movement . . . what expression! I won't even talk of it! You will offend me!"

"If one could plaster it over or stick on fig-leaves. . . ."

But the doctor gesticulated more violently than before, and dashing out of the flat, went home, glad that he had succeeded in getting the present off his hands.

When he had gone away the lawyer examined the candelabra, fingered it all over, and then, like the doctor, racked his brains over the question of what to do with the present.

"It's a fine thing," he mused, "and it would be a pity to throw it away, and improper to keep it. The very best thing would be to make a present of it to someone. . . . I know what! I'll take it this evening to Shashkin, the comedian. The rascal is fond of such things, and, by the way, it is his benefit to-night."

No sooner said than done. In the evening the candelabra, carefully wrapped up, was duly carried to Shashkin. The whole evening the comic actor's dressing-room was besieged by men coming to admire the present; the dressing-room was filled with the hum of enthusiasm and laughter like the neighing of horses. If one of the actresses approached the door and asked: "May I come in?" the comedian's husky voice was heard at once: "No, no, my dear, I am not dressed."

After the performance the comedian shrugged his shoulders, flung up his hands and said: "Well, what am I to do with the horrid thing? Why, I live in a private flat! Actresses come and see me! It's not a photograph that you can put in a drawer!"

"You had better sell it, sir," the hairdresser who was disrobing the actor advised him. "There's an old woman living about here who buys antique bronzes. Go and inquire for Madame Smirnov . . . everyone knows her."

The actor followed his advice. . . . Two days later the doctor was sitting in his consulting-room, and, with his finger to his brow, was meditating on the acids of the bile. All at once the door opened and Sasha Smirnov flew into the room. He was smiling, beaming, and his whole figure was radiant with happiness. In his hands he held something wrapped up in newspaper.

"Doctor!" he began, breathlessly, "imagine my delight! Happily for you we have succeeded in picking up the pair to your candelabra! Mamma is so happy. . . . I am the only son of my mother, you saved my life. . . ."

And Sasha, all of a tremor with gratitude, set the candelabra before the doctor. The doctor opened his mouth, tried to say something, but said nothing; he could not speak.

The World's Great Mystery Stories

I—The Last Adventure of Arsène Lupin

By MAURICE LEBLANC

"ARSÈNE LUPIN, what's your real opinion of Inspector Ganimard?"

"A very high one, my dear fellow."

"A very high one? Then why do you never miss a chance of turning him into ridicule?"

"It's a bad habit, and I'm sorry for it. But what can I say? It's the way of the world. Here's a decent detective chap, here's a whole heap of decent men, who stand for law and order, who protect us against the Apaches, who risk their lives for honest people like you and me, and we have nothing to give them in return but flouts and gibes. It's preposterous."

"Bravo, Lupin; you're talking like a respectable ratepayer!"

"What else am I? I may have peculiar views about other people's property, but I assure you that it's very different when my own's at stake. By Jove, it doesn't do to lay hands on what belongs to me! I have the soul of a conservative, my dear fellow, the instincts of a retired tradesman, and a due respect for every sort of tradition and authority. And that is why Ganimard inspires me with gratitude and esteem."

"But not much admiration."

"Plenty of admiration, too. Over and above the dauntless courage which comes naturally to all those gentry at the Criminal Investigation Department, Ganimard possesses very sterling qualities—decision, insight, and judgment. I have watched him at work. He's somebody, when all's said. Do you know the Edith Swan-Neck story, as it was called?"

"I know as much as everybody knows."

"That means that you don't know it at all. Well, that job was, I dare say, the one which I thought out most cleverly, with the utmost care and the utmost precaution, the one which I shrouded in the greatest darkness and mystery, the one which it took the biggest generalship to carry through. It was a regular game of chess, played according to strict scientific and mathematical rules. And yet Ganimard ended by unravelling the knot. Thanks to him, they know the truth to-day on the Quai des Orfèvres. (Where is situate the headquarters of the police in Paris.—*Translator's note.*) And it is a truth quite out of the common, I assure you."

"May I hope to hear it?"

"Certainly—one of these days—when I have time. But the Brunelli is dancing at the Opera to-night, and, if she were not to see me in my stall——"

I do not meet Lupin often. He confesses with difficulty, when it suits him. It was only gradually, by snatches, by odds and ends of confidences, that I was able to obtain the different incidents and to piece the story together in all its details.

Three years ago, when the train from Brest arrived at Rennes, the door of one of the luggage vans was found to be smashed in. This van had been booked by Colonel Sparmiento, a rich Brazilian, who was travelling with his wife in the same train. It contained a complete set of tapestry hangings. The case in which one of these was packed had been broken open, and the tapestry had disappeared.

Colonel Sparmiento started proceedings against the railway company, claiming heavy damages.

The police instituted inquiries. The company offered a large reward. A fortnight later, a letter which had come undone in the post was opened by the authorities, and revealed the fact that the theft had been carried out under the direction of Arsène Lupin, and that a package was to leave next day for the United States. That same evening the tapestry was discovered in a

trunk deposited in the cloak-room at the Gare Saint-Lazare.

So the scheme had miscarried. Lupin felt the disappointment so much that he vented his ill-humour in a communication to Colonel Sparmiento, ending with the following words, which were clear enough for anyone:

"It was very considerate of me to take only one. Next time I shall take the whole twelve. *Verbum sap.*

"A. L."

Colonel Sparmiento had been living for some months in a house standing at the end of a small garden at the corner of the Rue de la Faisanderie and the Rue Dufresnoy. He was a rather thick-set, broad-shouldered man, with black hair and a swarthy skin, always well and quietly dressed. He was married to an extremely pretty but delicate Englishwoman, who was much upset by the business of the tapestries. From the first she implored her husband to sell them for what they would fetch. The Colonel had much too forcible and dogged a nature to yield to what he had every right to describe as a woman's fancies. He sold nothing, but he redoubled his precautions and adopted every measure that was likely to make any attempt at burglary impossible.

To begin with, so that he might confine his watch to the garden front, he walled up all the windows on the ground floor and the first floor, overlooking the Rue Dufresnoy. Next he enlisted the services of a firm which made a speciality of protecting private houses against robberies of all sorts. Every window of the gallery in which the tapestries were hung was fitted with invisible burglar-alarms, the position of which was known to none but himself. These, at the least touch, switched on all the electric lights and set a whole system of bells and gongs ringing.

In addition to this, the insurance companies to which he applied refused to grant policies to any considerable amount unless he consented to let three men, supplied by the companies and paid by himself, occupy the ground floor of his house every night. They selected for the purpose three ex-detectives, tried and trustworthy men, all of whom hated Lupin like poison. As for the servants, the Colonel had known them for years, and was ready to vouch for them.

After taking all these steps and organizing the defence of the house as though it were a fortress, the Colonel gave a great house-warming, a sort of private view, to which he invited members of both his clubs, as well as a certain number of ladies, journalists, art-patrons and critics.

They felt, as they passed through the garden gate, much as if they were walking into a prison. The three private detectives, posted at the foot of the stairs, asked for each visitor's invitation-card and eyed him up and down suspiciously, making him feel as though they were going to search his pockets or take his finger-prints.

The Colonel, who received his guests on the first floor, made laughing apologies, and seemed delighted at the opportunity of explaining the arrangements which he had invented to secure the safety of his hangings. His wife stood by him, looking charmingly young and pretty, fair-haired, pale and sinuous, with a sad and gentle expression—the expression of resignation often worn by those who are threatened by fate.

When all the guests had come, the garden gates and hall doors were closed. Then everybody filed into the middle gallery, which was reached through two steel doors, while its windows, with their huge shutters, were protected by iron bars. This was where the twelve tapestries were kept.

They were matchless works of art, and, taking their inspiration from the famous Bayeux Tapestry attributed to Queen Matilda, they represented the story of the Norman Conquest. They had been ordered in the fourteenth century by the descendant of a man-at-arms in William the Conqueror's train, were executed by Jehan Gosset, a famous Arras weaver, and were discovered five hundred years later in an old Breton manor-house. On hearing of this, the Colonel had struck a bargain for fifty thousand francs. They were worth ten times the money.

But the finest of the twelve hangings composing the set, the most uncommon because the subject had not been treated by Queen Matilda, was the one which Arsène Lupin had stolen and which had been so fortunately recovered. It portrayed Edith Swan-Neck on the battlefield of Hastings, seeking among the dead for the body of her sweetheart, Harold, last of the Saxon kings.

The guests were lost in enthusiasm over this tapestry, over the unsophisticated beauty of the design, over the faded colours, over the life-like groupings of the figures

and the pitiful sadness of the scene. Poor Edith Swan-Neck stood drooping like an overweighted lily. Her white gown revealed the lines of her languid figure. Her long, tapering hands were outstretched in a gesture of terror and entreaty. And nothing could be more mournful than her profile, over which flickered the most dejected and despairing of smiles.

"A harrowing smile," remarked one of the critics, to whom the others listened with deference. "A very charming smile, besides; and it reminds me, Colonel, of the smile of Mme. Sparmiento."

And seeing that the observation seemed to meet with approval, he enlarged upon his idea.

"There are other points of resemblance that struck me at once, such as the very graceful curve of the neck and the delicacy of the hands, and also something about the figure, about the general attitude——"

"What you say is so true," said the Colonel, "that I confess that it was this likeness that decided me to buy the hangings. And there was another reason, which was that, by a really curious chance, my wife's name happens to be Edith. I have called her Edith Swan-Neck ever since." And the Colonel added, with a laugh, "I hope that the coincidence will stop at this, and that my dear Edith will never have to go in search of her true-lover's body, like her prototype."

He laughed as he uttered these words, but his laugh met with no echo; and we find the same impression of awkward silence in all the accounts of the evening that appeared during the next few days. The people standing near him did not know what to say. One of them tried to jest:

"Your name isn't Harold, Colonel?"

"No, thank you," he declared, with continued merriment. "No, that's not my name; nor am I in the least like the Saxon king."

All have since agreed in stating that, at that moment, as the Colonel finished speaking, the first alarm rang from the windows—the right or the middle window; opinions differ on this point—rang, short and shrill, on a single note. The peal of the alarm bell was followed by an exclamation of terror uttered by Mme. Sparmiento, who caught hold of her husband's arm. He cried:

"What's the matter? What does this mean?"

The guests stood motionless, with their eyes staring at the windows. The Colonel repeated:

"What does it mean? I don't understand. No one but myself knows where that bell is fixed——"

And, at that moment—here again the evidence is unanimous—at that moment came sudden, absolute darkness, followed immediately by the maddening din of all the bells and all the gongs, from top to bottom of the house, in every room and at every window.

For a few seconds, a stupid disorder, an insane terror reigned. The women screamed. The men banged with their fists on the closed doors. They hustled and fought. People fell to the floor and were trampled under foot. It was like a panic-stricken crowd, scared by threatening flames or by a bursting shell. And, above the uproar, rose the Colonel's voice, shouting:

"Silence! Don't move! It's all right! The switch is over there, in the corner. Wait a bit. Here!"

He had pushed his way through his guests and reached a corner of the gallery; and all at once the electric light blazed up again, while the pandemonium of bells stopped.

Then, in the sudden light, a strange sight met the eyes. Two ladies had fainted. Mme. Sparmiento, hanging to her husband's arm, with her knees dragging on the floor, and livid in the face, appeared half dead. The men, pale, with their neckties awry, looked as if they had all been in the wars.

"The tapestries are there!" cried someone.

There was a great surprise, as though the disappearance of those hangings ought to have been the natural result and the only plausible explanation of the incident. But nothing had been moved. A few valuable pictures, hanging on the walls, were there still. And, though the same din had reverberated all over the house, though all the rooms had been thrown into darkness, the detectives had seen no one entering or trying to enter.

"Besides," said the Colonel, "it's only the windows of the gallery that have alarms. Nobody but myself understands how they work; and I had not set them yet."

People laughed loudly at the way in which they had been frightened, but they laughed without conviction and in a more

or less shamefaced fashion, for each of them was keenly alive to the absurdity of his conduct. And they had but one thought, to get out of that house, where, say what you would, the atmosphere was one of agonizing anxiety.

¶

TWO journalists stayed behind, however, and the Colonel joined them, after attending to Edith and handing her over to her maids. The three of them, together with the detectives, made a search that did not lead to the discovery of anything of the least interest. Then the Colonel sent for some champagne; and the result was that it was not until a late hour—to be exact, a quarter to three in the morning—that the journalists took their leave, the Colonel retired to his quarters, and the detectives withdrew to the room which had been set aside for them on the ground floor.

They took the watch by turns, watch consisting, in the first place, in keeping awake, and, next, in looking round the garden and visiting the gallery at intervals.

These orders were scrupulously carried out, except between five and seven in the morning, when sleep gained the mastery and the men ceased to go their rounds. But it was broad daylight out of doors. Besides, if there had been the least sound of bells, would they not have awakened?

Nevertheless, when one of them, at twenty minutes past seven, opened the door of the gallery and flung back the shutters, he saw that the twelve tapestries were gone.

This man and the others were blamed afterwards for not giving the alarm at once, and for starting their own investigations before informing the Colonel and telephoning to the local commissary. Yet this very excusable delay can hardly be said to have hampered the action of the police. In any case, the Colonel was not told until half-past eight. He was dressed and ready to go out. The news did not seem to upset him beyond measure, or, at least, he succeeded in controlling his emotion. But the effort must have been too much for him, for he suddenly dropped into a chair and, for some moments, gave way to a regular fit of despair and anguish, most painful to behold in a man of his usually resolute appearance.

Recovering and mastering himself, he went to the gallery, stared at the bare walls, and then sat down at a table and hastily scribbled a letter, which he put into an envelope and sealed.

"There," he said, "I'm in a hurry. I have an important engagement. Here is a letter for the commissary of police." And, seeing the detectives' eyes upon him, he added, "I am giving the commissary my views—telling him of a suspicion that occurs to me. He must follow it up. I will do what I can——"

He left the house at a run, with excited gestures which the detectives were to remember subsequently.

A few minutes later, the commissary of police arrived. He was handed the letter containing the following words:

"I am at the end of my tether. The theft of those tapestries completes the crash which I have been trying to conceal for the past year. I bought them as a speculation, and was hoping to get a million francs for them, thanks to the fuss that was made about them. As it was, an American offered me six hundred thousand. It meant my salvation. This means utter destruction.

"I hope that my dear wife will forgive the sorrow which I am going to bring upon her. Her name will be on my lips at the last moment."

Mme. Sparmiento was informed. She remained aghast with horror, while inquiries were instituted and attempts made to trace the Colonel's movements.

Late in the afternoon, a telephone message came from Ville d'Avray. A gang of railway men had found a man's body lying at the entrance to a tunnel after a train had passed. The body was hideously mutilated; the face had lost all resemblance to anything human. There were no papers in the pockets, but the description answered to that of the Colonel.

Mme. Sparmiento arrived at Ville d'Avray by motor-car at seven o'clock in the evening. She was taken to a room at the railway station.

When the sheet that covered it was removed, Edith—Edith Swan-Neck—recognized her husband's body.

In these circumstances Lupin did not receive his usual good notices in the Press:

"Let him look to himself," jeered one

leader writer, summing up the general opinion. "It would not take many exploits of this kind for him to forfeit the popularity which has not been grudged him hitherto. We have no use for Lupin, except when his rogueries are perpetrated at the expense of shady company promoters, foreign adventurers, German barons, banks and financial companies. And, above all, no murders! A burglar we can put up with; but a murderer—no! If he is not directly guilty, he is at least responsible for this death. There is blood upon his hands; the arms on his escutcheon are stained gules. . . ."

The public anger and disgust were increased by the pity which Edith's pale face aroused. The guests of the night before gave their version of what had happened, omitting none of the impressive details, and a legend formed straightway around the fair-haired Englishwoman—a legend that assumed a really tragic character owing to the popular story of the swan-necked heroine.

And yet the public could not withhold its admiration of the extraordinary skill with which the theft had been effected. The police explained it, after a fashion. The detectives had noticed from the first and subsequently stated that one of the three windows of the gallery was wide open. There could be no doubt that Lupin and his confederates had entered through this window. It seemed a very plausible suggestion. Still, in that case, how were they able, firstly, to climb the garden railings in coming and going, without being seen; secondly, to cross the garden and put up a ladder on the flower border without leaving the least trace behind; thirdly, to open the shutters and the window without starting the bells and switching on the lights in the house?

The police accused the three detectives of complicity. The magistrate in charge of the case examined them at length, made minute inquiries into their private lives, and stated formally that they were above all suspicion. As for the tapestries, there seemed to be no hope that they would be recovered.

It was at this moment that Chief Inspector Ganimard returned from India, where he had been hunting for Lupin on the strength of a number of most convincing proofs supplied by former confederates of Lupin himself. Feeling that he had once more been tricked by his everlasting adversary, fully believing that Lupin had dispatched him on this wild-goose-chase so as to be rid of him during the business of the tapestries, he asked for a fortnight's leave of absence, called on Mme. Sparmiento, and promised to revenge her husband.

Edith had reached the point at which not even the thought of vengeance relieves the sufferer's pain. She had dismissed the three detectives on the day of the funeral, and engaged just one man and an old cook-housekeeper to take the place of the large staff of servants, the sight of whom reminded her too cruelly of the past.

Not caring what happened, she kept her room and left Ganimard free to act as he pleased.

He took up his quarters on the ground floor, and at once instituted a series of the most minute investigations. He started the inquiry afresh, questioned the people in the neighbourhood, studied the distribution of the rooms, and set each of the burglar alarms going thirty and forty times over.

At the end of the fortnight he asked for an extension of leave. The chief of the detective service, who was at that time M. Dudouis, came to see him, and found him perched on the top of a ladder in the gallery. That day the chief inspector admitted that all his searches had been useless.

Two days later, however, M. Dudouis called again and discovered Ganimard in a very thoughtful frame of mind. A bundle of newspapers lay spread in front of him. At last, in reply to his superior's most urgent questions, the chief inspector muttered:

"I know nothing, chief, absolutely nothing; but there's a confounded notion worrying me—only it seems so absurd; and then it doesn't explain things. On the contrary, it confuses them rather——"

"Then——"

"Then I implore you, chief, to have a little patience—to let me go my own way. But, if I telephone to you some day or other, suddenly, you must jump into a taxi, without losing a minute. It will mean that I have discovered the secret."

Forty-eight hours passed. Then, one morning M. Dudouis received a telegram:

"Going to Lille.

"GANIMARD."

"What the dickens can he want to go

to Lille for?" wondered the chief detective.

The day passed without news, followed by another day. But, M. Dudouis had every confidence in Ganimard. He knew his man, knew that the old detective was not one of those people who excite themselves for nothing. When Ganimard "got a move on him," it meant that he had sound reasons for doing so.

As a matter of fact, on the evening of that second day M. Dudouis was called to the telephone.

"Is that you, chief?"

"Is it Ganimard speaking?"

Cautious men both, they began by making sure of each other's identity. As soon as his mind was eased on this point, Ganimard continued hurriedly:

"Ten men, chief, at once. And, please, come yourself."

"Where are you?"

"In the house, on the ground floor. But I will wait for you just inside the garden gate."

"I'll come at once."

"Do, chief. Stop the taxi fifty yards from the house. I'll let you in when you whistle."

Things took place as Ganimard had arranged. Shortly after midnight, when all the lights were out on the upper floors, he slipped into the street and went to meet M. Dudouis. There was a hurried consultation. The officers distributed themselves as Ganimard ordered. Then the chief and the chief inspector walked back together, noiselessly crossed the garden, and closeted themselves with every precaution.

"Well, what's it all about?" asked M. Dudouis. "What does all this mean? Upon my word, we look like a pair of conspirators!"

But Ganimard was not laughing. His chief had never seen him in such a state of perturbation, nor heard him speak in a voice denoting such excitement.

"Any news, Ganimard?"

"Yes, chief, and—this time——! But I can hardly believe it myself. And yet I'm not mistaken; I know the real truth. It may be as unlikely as you please, but it is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

He wiped away the drops of perspiration that trickled down his forehead and, after a further question from M. Dudouis, pulled himself together, swallowed a glass of water and began:

"Lupin has often got the best of me——"

"Look here, Ganimard," said M. Dudouis, interrupting him, "why can't you come straight to the point? Tell me, in two words, what's happened."

"No, chief," retorted the chief inspector; "it is essential that you should know the different stages which I have passed through. Excuse me, but I consider it indispensable." And he repeated, "I was saying, chief, that Lupin has often got the best of me and led me many a dance. But in this contest in which I have always come out worst—so far—I have at least gained experience of his manner of play and learnt to know his tactics. Now, in the matter of tapestries, it occurred to me almost from the start to set myself two problems. In the first place, Lupin, who never makes a move without knowing what he is after, was obviously aware that Colonel Sparmiento had come to the end of his money, and that the loss of the tapestries might drive him to suicide. Nevertheless, Lupin, who hates the very thought of bloodshed, stole the tapestries."

"There was the inducement," said M. Dudouis, "of the five or six hundred thousand francs which they are worth."

"No, chief; I tell you once more, whatever the occasion might be, Lupin would not take life, nor be the cause of another person's death, for anything in this world, for millions and millions. That's the first point. In the second place, what was the object of all that disturbance, in the evening, during the house-warming party? Obviously, don't you think, to surround the business with an atmosphere of anxiety and terror, in the shortest possible time, and also to divert suspicion from the truth, which otherwise might easily have been suspected? You seem not to understand, chief?"

"Upon my word, I do not!"

"As a matter of fact," said Ganimard, "as a matter of fact, it is not particularly plain. And I myself, when I put the problem before my mind in those same words, did not understand it very clearly. And yet I felt that I was on the right track. Yes, there was no doubt about it that Lupin wanted to divert suspicions—to divert them to himself, Lupin, mark you—so that the real person who was working the business might remain unknown."

"A confederate," suggested M. Dudouis. "A confederate, moving among the visitors, who set the alarms going, and who managed to hide in the house after the party had broken up."

"You're getting warm, chief, you're getting warm! It is certain that the tapestries, as they cannot have been stolen by anyone making his way surreptitiously into the house, were stolen by somebody who remained in the house; and it is equally certain that, by taking the list of the people invited and inquiring into the antecedents of each of them, one might——"

"Well?"

"Well, chief, there's a 'but,' namely, that the three detectives had this list in their hands when the guests arrived, and that they still had it when the guests left. Now, sixty-three came in and sixty-three went away. So you see——"

"Then do you suppose a servant——"

"No."

"The detectives?"

"No."

"But, still—but, still," said the chief impatiently, "if the robbery was committed from the inside——"

"That is beyond dispute," declared the inspector, whose excitement seemed to be nearing fever point. "There is no question about it. All my investigations led to the same certainty. And my conviction gradually became so positive that I ended one day by drawing up this startling axiom; in theory, and in fact, the robbery can only have been committed with the assistance of an accomplice staying in the house; whereas there was no accomplice!"

"That's absurd," said Dudouis.

"Quite absurd," said Ganimard. "But, at the very moment when I uttered that absurd sentence, the truth flashed upon me."

"Eh?"

"Oh, a very dim, very incomplete, but still sufficient truth! With that clue to guide me, I was bound to find the way. Do you follow me, chief?"

M. Dudouis sat silent. The same phenomenon that had taken place in Ganimard was evidently taking place in him. He muttered:

"If it's not one of the guests, nor the servants, nor the private detectives, then there's no one left——"

"Yes, chief, there's one left."

M. Dudouis started as though he had received a shock, and, in a voice that betrayed excitement said:

"But look here, that's preposterous."

"Why?"

"Come, think for yourself!"

"Go on, chief; say what's in your mind."

"Nonsense! What do you mean?"

"Go on, chief," said Ganimard.

"It's impossible! How can Sparmiento have been Lupin's accomplice?"

Ganimard gave a little chuckle:

"Exactly, Arsène Lupin's accomplice! That explains everything. During the night, while the three detectives were downstairs watching—or sleeping, rather, for Colonel Sparmiento had given them champagne to drink and perhaps doctored it beforehand—the said Colonel took down the hangings and passed them out through the window of his bedroom. The room is on the second floor, and looks out on another street, which was not watched because the lower windows are walled up."

M. Dudouis reflected, and then shrugged his shoulders.

"It's preposterous!" he repeated.

"Why?"

"Why? Because if the Colonel had

Euphrosyne

JOY is a beacon—and why should we smoulder it?
Care is a burden—and why should we shoulder it?
Mirth is a star of the sky.

Space is a guess, and the world's an experiment;
Life is a sum, and our answer is Merriment.
Nothing is less than a sigh.

Love is a Harlequin, blithe and imperious;
Youth is a Columbine, sweetly delirious,
Fresh in the promise of May.

Time is a pageant, and Now is the best of it;
Why in the world should we fear for the rest of it!
Dance in the glow of To-day!

A. G.

been Arsène Lupin's accomplice, he would not have committed suicide after achieving his success."

"Who says that he committed suicide?"

"Why, he was found dead on the line!"

"I told you there is no such thing as death with Lupin."

"Still, this was genuine enough. Besides, Mme. Sparmiento identified the body."

"I thought you would say that, chief. The argument worried me, too. There was I, all of a sudden, with three people in front of me instead of one: firstly, Arsène Lupin, cracksman; secondly, Colonel Sparmiento, his accomplice; thirdly, a dead man. Spare us! It was too much of a good thing!"

Ganimard took a bundle of newspapers, untied it, and handed one of them to M. Dudouis:

"You remember, chief, last time you were here I was looking through the papers—I wanted to see if something had not happened at that period that might bear upon the case and confirm my supposition. Please read this paragraph."

M. Dudouis took the paper and read aloud:

"Our Lille correspondent informs us that a curious incident has occurred in that town. A corpse has disappeared from the local morgue, the corpse of a man unknown who threw himself under the wheels of a steam tramcar on the day before. No one is able to suggest a reason for this disappearance."

M. Dudouis sat thinking, and then asked:

"So—you believe——"

"I have just come from Lille," replied Ganimard, "and my inquiries leave not a doubt in my mind. The corpse was removed on the same night on which Colonel Sparmiento gave his house-warming. It was taken straight to Ville d'Avray by motor-car, and the car remained near the railway line until the evening."

"Near the tunnel, therefore?" said M. Dudouis.

"Next to it, chief."

"So that the body which was found is merely that body dressed in Colonel Sparmiento's clothes?"

"Precisely, chief."

"Then Colonel Sparmiento is not dead?"

"No more dead than you or I, chief."

"But, then, why all these complications? Why the theft of one tapestry, followed by its recovery, followed by the theft of the twelve? Why that house-warming? Why that disturbance? Why everything? Your story won't hold water, Ganimard."

"Only because you, chief, like myself, have stopped half-way; because, strange as this story already sounds, we must go still farther, very much farther, in the direction of the improbable and the astounding. And why not, after all? Remember that we are dealing with Arsène Lupin. With him, is it not always just the improbable and the astounding that we must look for? Must we not always go straight for the maddest suppositions? And, when I say the maddest, I am using the wrong word. On the contrary, the whole thing is wonderfully logical and so simple that a child could understand it. Confederates only betray you. Why employ confederates, when it is so easy and so natural to act for yourself, by yourself, with your own hands, and by the means within your own reach?"

"What are you saying? What are you saying? What are you saying?" cried M. Dudouis, in a sort of sing-song voice and a tone of bewilderment that increased with each separate exclamation.

Ganimard gave a fresh chuckle:

"Takes your breath away, chief, doesn't it? So it did mine on the day when you came to see me here and when the notion was beginning to grow upon me. I was flabbergasted with astonishment; and yet I've had experience of my customer. I know what he's capable of. But this—no; this was really a bit too stiff!"

"It's impossible! It's impossible!" said M. Dudouis in a low voice.

"On the contrary, chief, it's quite possible and quite logical and quite normal. It's the threefold incarnation of one and the same individual. A schoolboy would solve the problem in a minute by a simple process of elimination. Take away the dead man, there remains Sparmiento and Lupin. Take away Sparmiento——"

"There remains Lupin," muttered the chief detective.

"Yes, chief, Lupin simply, Lupin in five letters and two syllables, Lupin taken out of his Brazilian skin, Lupin revived from the dead, Lupin transferred for the past six months into Colonel Sparmiento,

travelling in Brittany, hearing of the discovery of the twelve tapestries, buying them, planning the theft of the best of them so as to draw attention to himself, Lupin, and divert it from himself, Sparmiento. Next, he brings about, in full view of the gaping public, a noisy contest between Lupin and Sparmiento, or Sparmiento and Lupin, plots and realizes the house-warming party, terrifies his guests, and, when everything is ready, arranges for Lupin to steal Sparmiento's tapestries, and for Sparmiento, Lupin's victim, to disappear from sight and die unsuspected, unsuspectable, regretted by his friends, pitied by the public, and leaving behind him, to pocket the profits of the swindle——"

Ganimard stopped, looked the chief in the eyes, and, in a voice that emphasized the importance of his words, concluded:

"Leaving behind him a disconsolate widow."

"Mme. Sparmiento! You really believe——"

"Hang it all!" said the chief inspector. "People don't work up a whole business of this sort without seeing something ahead of them—solid profits."

"But the profits, it seems to me, lie in the sale of the tapestries which Lupin will effect in America or elsewhere."

"First of all, yes. But Colonel Sparmiento could effect that sale just as well, and even better; so there's something more."

"Something more?"

"Come, chief, you're forgetting that Colonel Sparmiento has been the victim of an important robbery, and that, though he may be dead, at least his widow remains. So it's his widow who will get the money."

"What money?"

"What money? Why, the money due to her! The insurance money, of course."

M. Dudouis was staggered. The whole business suddenly became clear to him with its real meaning. He muttered:

"That's true! That's true! The Colonel had insured his tapestries——"

"Rather! And for no trifle, either."

"For how much?"

"Eight hundred thousand francs."

"Eight hundred thousand!"

"Just so. In five different companies."

"And has Mme. Sparmiento had the money?"

"She got a hundred and fifty thousand francs yesterday, and two hundred thousand to-day, while I was away. The remaining payments are to be made in the course of this week."

"But this is terrible! You ought to have——"

"What, chief? To begin with, they took advantage of my absence to settle up accounts with the companies. I only heard about it on my return, when I ran up against an insurance manager whom I happen to know, and took the opportunity of drawing him out."

The chief detective was silent for some time, not knowing what to say. Then he mumbled:

"What a fellow, though!"

Ganimard nodded his head.

"Yes, chief, a blackguard, but—I can't help saying—the devil of a clever fellow. For his plan to succeed, he must have managed in such a way that, for four or five weeks, no one could express or even conceive the least suspicion of the part played by Colonel Sparmiento. All the indignation and all the inquiries had to be concentrated upon Lupin alone. In the last resort, people had to find themselves faced simply with a mournful, pitiful, penniless widow, poor Edith Swan-neck, a beautiful and legendary vision, a creature so touching that the gentlemen of the insurance companies were almost glad to place something in her hands to relieve her poverty and her grief. That's what was wanted, and that's what happened."

The two men were close together, and did not take their eyes from each other's faces.

The chief asked:

"Who is that woman?"

"Sonia Kritchnoff."

"Sonia Kritchnoff!"

"Yes, the Russian girl whom I arrested last year at the time of the theft of the coronet, and whom Lupin helped to escape."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely. I was put off the scent, like everybody else, by Lupin's machinations, and had paid no particular attention to her. But, when I knew the part which she was playing, I remembered. She is certainly Sonia, metamorphosed into an Englishwoman; Sonia, the most innocent-looking and the trickiest of actresses; Sonia, who would not hesitate to face death for love of Lupin."

"A good catch, Ganimard," said M. Dudouis, approvingly.

"I've something better still for you, chief."

"Really? What?"

"Lupin's old foster-mother."

"Victoire?"

"She has been here since Mme. Sparmiento began playing the widow; she's the cook."

"Oho!" said M. Dudouis. "My congratulations, Ganimard!"

"I've something for you, chief, that's even better than that!"

M. Dudouis gave a start. The inspector's hand clutched his, and was shaking with excitement.

"What do you mean, Ganimard?"

"Do you think, chief, that I would have brought you here at this late hour if I had had nothing more attractive to offer you than Sonia and Victoire? Pah! They'd have kept!"

"You mean to say——" whispered M. Dudouis, at last understanding the chief inspector's agitation.

"You've guessed it, chief."

"Is he here?"

"He's here."

"In hiding?"

"Not a bit of it. Simply in disguise. He's the manservant."

This time M. Dudouis did not utter a word nor make a gesture. Lupin's audacity confounded him.

Ganimard chuckled:

"It's no longer a threefold, but a fourfold incarnation. Edith Swan-neck might have blundered. The master's presence was necessary, and he had the cheek to return. For three weeks he has been beside me during my inquiry, calmly following the progress made."

"Did you recognize him?"

"One doesn't recognize him. He has a knack of making-up his face and altering the proportions of his body so as to prevent anyone from knowing him. Besides, I was miles from suspecting. But this evening, as I was watching Sonia in the shadow of the stairs, I heard Victoire speak to the manservant and call him 'Dearie.' A light flashed in upon me. 'Dearie!' That was what she always used to call him. And I knew where I was."

M. Dudouis seemed flustered, in his turn, by the immediate presence of the enemy, so often pursued and always so intangible.

"We've got him this time," he said between his teeth. "We've got him, and he can't escape us."

"No, chief, he can't; neither he nor the two women."

"Where are they?"

"Sonia and Victoire are on the second floor; Lupin is on the third."

M. Dudouis suddenly became anxious:

"Why it was through the windows of one of those floors that the tapestries were passed when they disappeared."

"That's so, chief."

"In that case, Lupin can get away, too. The windows look out on the Rue Dufresnoy."

"Of course they do, chief; but I have taken my precautions. The moment you arrived I sent four of our men to keep watch under the windows in the Rue Dufresnoy. They have strict orders to shoot if anyone appears at the windows and looks like coming down. Blank cartridges for the first shot, ball cartridges for the next."

"Good, Ganimard! You have thought of everything. We'll wait here, and immediately after sunrise——"

"Wait, chief? Stand on ceremony with that rascal? Bother about rules and regulations, legal hours, and all that rot? And suppose he's not quite so polite to us, and gives us the slip meanwhile? Suppose he plays us one of his Lupin tricks? No, no; we must have no nonsense! We've got him; let's collar him, and that without delay!"

And Ganimard, all a-quiver with indignant impatience, went out, walked across the garden, and presently returned with half a dozen men.

"It's all right, chief. I've told them in the Rue Dufresnoy to get their revolvers out and aim at the windows. Come along."

These alarums and excursions had not been effected without a certain amount of noise, which was bound to be heard by the inhabitants of the house. M. Dudouis felt that his hand was forced. He made up his mind to act."

"Come on, then," he said.

The thing did not take long. The eight of them, Browning pistols in hand, went up the stairs without overmuch precaution, eager to surprise Lupin before he had time to organize his defences.

"Open the door!" roared Ganimard, rushing at the door of Mme. Sparmiento's bedroom.

A policeman smashed it in with his shoulder.

There was no one in the room, and no one in Victoire's bedroom either.

"They're upstairs!" shouted Ganimard. "They've gone up to Lupin in his attic. Be careful now!"

All the eight ran up the third flight of stairs. To his great astonishment, Ganimard found the door open and the attic empty. And the other rooms were empty, too.

"Curse them!" he roared. "What's become of them?"

But the chief called him. M. Dudouis, who had gone down again to the second floor, noticed that one of the windows was not latched, but just pushed to.

"There," he said to Ganimard, "that's the road they took, the road of the tapestries. I told you as much; the Rue Dufresnoy——"

"But our men would have fired on them," protested Ganimard, grinding his teeth with rage. "The street's guarded."

"They must have gone before the street was guarded."

"They were all three of them in their rooms when I rang you up, chief."

"They must have gone while you were waiting for me in the garden."

"But why? Why? There was no reason why they should go to-day rather than to-morrow, or the next day, or the next week, for that matter, when they had pocketed all the insurance-money."

Yes, there was a reason, and Ganimard knew it when he saw, on the table, a letter addressed to himself and opened it and read it. The letter was worded in the style of the testimonials which we hand to people in our service who have given satisfaction:

"I, the undersigned Arsène Lupin, gentleman-burglar, ex-colonel, ex-man-of-all-work, ex-corpse, hereby certify that the person of the name of Ganimard gave proof of the most remarkable qualities during his stay in this house. He was exemplary in his behaviour, thoroughly devoted and attentive, and, unaided by the least clue, he foiled a part of my plans and saved the insurance companies 450,000 francs. I congratulate him, and I am quite willing to overlook his blunder in not anticipating that the downstair telephone communicates with the telephone in Sonia Kritchnoff's bedroom, and that, when telephoning to Mr. Chief Detective, he was at the same time telephoning to me to clear out as fast as I could. It was a pardonable slip, which must not be allowed to dim the glamour of his services nor to detract from the merits of his victory.

"Having said this, I beg him to accept the homage of my admiration and of my sincere friendship.

"ARSÈNE LUPIN."

Next Month's Mystery Story: THE LIGHTED CANDLES, by Robert Hichens

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Love

THE magic of first love is our ignorance that it can ever end.—DISRAELI.

LOVE did nothing but prove the soundness of La Rochefoucauld's saying that very few people would fall in love if they had never read about it.—G. B. SHAW.

A LOVER without indiscretion is no lover at all.—THOMAS HARDY.

WHO does not know how to love has but a faithless heart.—VOLTAIRE.

WHEN one is in love one begins to deceive oneself. And one ends by deceiving others.—OSCAR WILDE.

LOVE is like the measles; we all have to go through it.—JEROME K. JEROME.

No woman hates a man for being in love with her; but many a woman hates a man for being a friend to her.—POPE.

LOVE will stir imaginations that have never stirred before.—H. G. WELLS.

THE praise that comes of love does not make us vain, but humble rather.—SIR J. M. BARRIE.

A Day in the Garden

The Greatest Refreshment

GOD Almighty first planted a garden: and indeed it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment of the spirits of man; without which, buildings and palaces are but gross handyworks: and a man shall ever see, that when ages grow to civility and elegancy, men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely, as if gardening were the greater perfection. I do hold it in the royal ordering of gardens, there ought to be gardens for all the months in the year: in which, severally, things of beauty may be then in season.—Francis Bacon.

HERE at the fountain's sliding foot
Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs doth glide:
There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
Then whets and claps its silver wings,
And, till prepared for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various light.

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walked without a mate:
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could there be meet!
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises are in one,
To live in paradise alone.

How well the skilful gardener drew
Of flowers, and herbs, this dial new,
Where, from above, the milder sun
Does through a fragrant Zodiac run,
And, as it works, the industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we!
How could such sweet and welcome hours
Be reckoned but with herbs and flowers?

—Andrew Marvell.

The Garden in Autumn

IT was a peaceful autumn day. The gilding of the Indian summer mellowed the pastures far and wide. The russet woods stood ripe to be stript, but were yet full of leaf. The purple of heath-bloom, faded but not withered, tinged the hills. The beck wandered down to the Hollow, through a silent district; no wind followed its course, or haunted its woody borders. Fieldhead gardens bore the seal of gentle decay. On the walks, swept that morning, yellow leaves had fluttered down again. Its time of flowers, and even of fruits, was over, but a scantling of apples enriched the trees; only a blossom here and there expanded pale and delicate amidst a knot of faded leaves.—Charlotte Brontë.

Happy Places

THE most exquisite delights of sense are pursued, in the contrivance and plantation of gardens; which, with fruits, flowers, shades, fountains, and the music of the birds that frequent such happy places, seem to furnish all the pleasures of the several senses, and, with the greatest, or at least the most natural perfections.—Sir William Temple.

Innocent Delights

YOU must know, Sir, that I look upon the pleasure which we take in a Garden, as one of the innocent Delights in human life. A Garden was the Habitation of our first Parents before the Fall. It is naturally apt to fill the mind with Calmness and Tranquillity, and to lay all its turbulent Passions at rest. It gives us a great insight into the Contrivance and Wisdom of Providence, and suggests innumerable subjects for Meditation. I cannot but think the very Complacency and Satisfaction which a man takes in these Works of Nature, to be a laudable, if not a virtuous Habit of Mind.—Joseph Addison.

A Farmhouse Garden

A TRUE farmhouse garden with hardy perennial flowers, unpruned fruit-trees, and kitchen vegetables growing together in careless, half-neglected abundance. In that leafy, flowery, bushy time, to look for anyone in the garden was like playing at "hide-and-seek." There were the tall hollyhocks beginning to flower, and dazzle the eye with their pink, white, and yellow; there were the syringas and guildras roses, all large and disorderly for want of trimming; there were leafy walls of scarlet beans and late peas; there was a row of bushy filberts in one direction, and in another a huge apple tree making a barren circle under its low-spreading boughs.—George Eliot.

WHEN God did Man to His own likeness Make,
As much as clay, though of the purest kind,
By the great potter's art refin'd,
Could the divine impression take,
He thought it fit to place him, where
A kind of heaven, too, did appear,
As far as earth could such a likeness bear:
That man no happiness might want,
Which earth to her first Master could afford,
He did a garden for him plant
By the quick hand of his omnipotent word,
As the chief help and joy of human life,
He gave him the first gift; first, ev'n before a wife.

—Abraham Cowley.

The Law of the Earth Must be Fulfilled

TO enjoy gardening in all its fulness, there must be patience. It is not recognised as it might be that gardening is the most powerful counterpoise within our reach in the exhausting struggle for existence which is now a component part of our national life. It is not by the expelling force of one excitement over another that it works, but by the soothing anodyne of a calm and quieting influence insensibly acting upon over-strained nerves and tired brains. If this be so, and experience abundantly proves it, let us resist

with all our strength the temptation to bring the hurry of workaday life into our gardens. A beautiful pleasance, which is to me the embodiment of repose and peace, cannot be created by the wave of the Magician's wand. We need not regret it, for were it so it would lose its power over the restless spirit. Be we never so impatient, the law of the earth must needs be fulfilled, and we ourselves must tarry for her precious fruits.—E. T. Cook.

A GARDEN is a lovesome thing, God wot!
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot—
The veriest school
Of peace; and yet the fool
Contends that God is not—
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign:
'Tis very sure God walks in mine.—Thomas Edward Brown.

Every Man His Own Garden

ALTHOUGH many men must be content with any plat of ground, of what form or quantity soever it be, more or less, for their Garden, because a more large or convenient cannot be had to their habitation: Yet I persuade myself, that Gentlemen of the better sort and quality, will provide such a parcel of groũnd to be laid out for their Garden, and in such convenient manner, as may be fit and answerable to the degree they hold. To prescribe one form for every man to follow, were too great presumption and folly; for every man will please his own fancy, according to the extent he designeth out for that purpose, be it orbicular or round, triangular or three square, quadrangular or four square, or more long than broad.—John Parkinson.

THERE was a power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden; a ruling Grace
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind,
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean.

Tended the garden from morn to even:
And the meteors of that sublunar heaven,
Like the lamps of the air when Night walks forth,
Laughed round her footsteps up from the earth. . . .

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers through all this frame.—Shelley.

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A Week-End Cottage

The humours of a brief holiday far from the madding crowd

By JEROME K. JEROME

IT was our cow that woke me the first morning. I did not know it was our cow—not at the time. I didn't know we had a cow. I looked at my watch; it was half-past two. I thought, maybe, she would go to sleep again, but her idea was that the day had begun. I went to the window; the moon was at the full. She was standing by the gate, her head inside the garden; I took it, her anxiety was lest we might miss any of it. Her neck was stretched out straight, her eyes towards the sky—which gave to her the appearance of a long-eared alligator. I have never had much to do with cows; I don't know how you talk to them. I told her to "be quiet," and to "lie down," and made pretence to throw a boot at her. It seemed to cheer her, having an audience; she added half a dozen extra notes. I never knew before a cow had so much in her. There is a thing one sometimes meets with in the suburbs—or one used to. I do not know whether it is still extant, but when I was a boy it was quite common. It has a hurdy-gurdy fixed to its waist and a drum strapped on behind, a row of pipes hanging from its face, and bells and clappers from most of its other joints. It plays them all at once, and smiles. This cow reminds me of it—with organ effects added. She didn't smile; there was that to be said in her favour.

I hoped that if I made believe to be asleep she would get discouraged, so I closed the window ostentatiously, and went back to bed. But this only had the effect of putting her on her mettle. "He did not care for that last," I imagined her saying to herself. "I wasn't at my best. There wasn't feeling enough in it." She kept it up for about half an hour, and then the gate against which, I suppose, she had been leaning, gave way with a crash. That frightened her, and I heard her gallop off across the field. I was on the point of dozing off again when a pair of pigeons settled on the window-sill and began to coo. It is a pretty sound when you are in the mood for it. I wrote a poem once—a simple thing, but instinct with longing—while sitting under a tree and listening to the cooing of a pigeon. But that was in the afternoon. My only longing now was for a gun. Three times I got out of bed and "shoo'd" them away. The third time I remained by the window till I had got it firmly into their heads that I really did not want them. My behaviour on the former two occasions they had evidently judged to be mere playfulness.

I had just got back to bed again when an owl began to screech. That is another sound I used to think attractive—so weird, so mysterious. It is Swinburne, I think, who says that you never get the desired one and the time and the place all right together. If the beloved one is with you, it is the wrong place or at the wrong time; and if the time and the place happen to be right, then it is the party that is wrong. The owl was all right; I like owls. The place was all right. He had struck the wrong time, that was all. Eleven o'clock at night, when you can't see him, and naturally feel that you want to, is the proper time for an owl. Perched on the roof of a cowshed in the early dawn he looks silly. He clung there, flapping his wings and screeching at the top of his voice. What it was he wanted I am sure I don't know; and, anyhow, it didn't seem the way to get it. He came to this conclusion himself at the end of about twenty minutes, and shut himself up and went home. I thought I was going to have at last some peace, when a corncrake—a creature upon whom Nature has bestowed a song like to the tearing of calico sheets mingled with the sharpening of saws—settled somewhere in the garden and set to work to praise its maker according to its lights.

I have a friend, a poet, who lives just off the Strand, and spends his evenings at the Garrick Club. He writes occasional verse for the evening papers, and talks about the "silent country, drowsy with the weight of languors." One of these times I'll lure him

down for a Saturday to Monday, and let him find out what the country really is—let him hear it. He is becoming too much of a dreamer; it will do him good, wake him up a bit. The corncrake after a while stopped quite suddenly with a jerk, and for quite five minutes there was silence.

"If this continues for another five minutes," I said to myself, "I'll be asleep." I felt it coming over me. I had hardly murmured the words when the cow turned up again. I should say she had been somewhere and had had a drink. She was in better voice than ever.

It occurred to me this would be an opportunity for making a few notes on the sunrise. The literary man is looked to for occasional descriptions of the sunrise. Anyhow, further sleep was impossible. I slipped on a few things—nothing elaborate, put a notebook in my pocket, and went down.

Perhaps it would be more correct to say, "opened the door and was down." These old-fashioned stairs want practice. There is no landing whatever, and they are just as steep as a ladder. I picked myself up and started for the door. It took more finding than I could have believed possible. The shutters were closed, and the whole place was in pitch darkness. The idea had been to furnish this cottage only with things that were absolutely necessary, but the room appeared to me to be overcrowded. There was a milking-stool, which is a thing made purposely so that it may not be easily upset. If I tumbled over it once I tumbled over it a dozen times. I got hold of it at last and carried it about with me; I thought I would use it to hit the cow—that is, when I had found the front door. I knew it led out of the parlour, but could not recollect its exact position. I argued that if I kept along the wall I would be bound to come to it. I found the wall, and set off full of hope. I suppose the explanation was that, without knowing it, I must have started with the door—not the front door, the other door, leading into the kitchen. I crept along carefully, feeling my way, and struck quite new things altogether—things I had no recollection of, and that hit me in fresh places. I climbed over what I presumed to be a beer-barrel, and landed among bottles; there were dozens upon dozens of them. To get away from these bottles I had to leave the wall; but I found it again, as I thought, and I felt along it for another half a dozen yards or so, and then came again upon bottles—the room appeared to be paved with bottles.

A little farther on I rolled over another beer-barrel. As a matter of fact, it was the same beer-barrel, but I did not know this. At the time it seemed to me that Robina had made up her mind to run a public-house. I found the milking-stool again, and started afresh, and before I had gone a dozen steps was in among the bottles again. Later on, in the broad daylight, it was easy enough to understand what had happened. I had been carefully feeling my way round and round a screen. I got so sick of these bottles, and so tired of rolling over those everlasting beer-barrels, that I abandoned the wall and plunged boldly into space.

¶

I HAD barely started, when, looking up, I saw the sky above me; a star was twinkling just above my head. Had I been wide awake, and had the cow stopped bellowing for just one minute, I should have guessed that, somehow or another, I had got into a chimney. But, as things were, the wonder and the mystery of it all appalled me. Alice's adventures in Wonderland would have appeared to me, at the moment, in the nature of a guide to travellers. Had a rocking-horse or a lobster suddenly appeared to me I should have sat and talked to it; and if it had not answered me I should have thought it sulky and been hurt. I took a step forward, and the star disappeared, just as if somebody had blown it out. I was not surprised in the least. I was expecting anything to happen.

I found a door, and it opened quite easily. A wood was in front of me. I couldn't see any cow anywhere, but I still heard her. It all seemed quite natural. I would wander into the wood; most likely I would meet her there, and she would be smoking a pipe. In all probability she would know some poetry.

With the fresh air my senses gradually came back to me, and I began to understand why it was I could not see the cow. The reason was that the house was between us. By some mysterious process I had been discharged into the back garden. I still had the milking-stool in my hand, but the cow no longer troubled me. Let her see if she could wake our maid by merely bellowing outside the door; it was more than I had ever been able to do.

I sat down on the stool and opened my notebook. I headed the page, "Sunrise in July: Observations and Emotions," and I wrote down at once, lest I should forget it, that towards three o'clock a faint light is discernible, and added that this light gets stronger as the time goes on.

It sounded footling even to myself, but I had been reading a novel of the realistic school, that had been greatly praised for its actuality. There is a demand in some quarters for this class of observation. I likewise made a note that the pigeon and the corncrake appear to be among the earliest of Nature's children to welcome the coming day, and added that the screech-owl may be heard, perhaps at its best, by anyone caring to rise for the purpose, some quarter of an hour before the dawn. That was all I could think of just then. As regards emotions, I did not seem to have any.

¶

I LIT a pipe and waited for the sun. The sky in front of me was tinged with a faint pink. Every moment it blushed a deeper red. I maintain that anyone, not an expert, would have said that was the portion of the horizon on which to keep one's eye. I kept my eye upon it, but no sun appeared. I lit another pipe. The sky in front of me was now a blaze of glory. I scribbled a few lines, likening the scattered clouds to brides blushing at the approach of the bridegroom. That would have been all right if, later on, they hadn't begun to turn green; it seemed the wrong colour for a bride. Later on still they went yellow, and that spoilt the simile past hope. One cannot wax poetical about a bride who at the approach of the bridegroom turns first green and then yellow; you can only feel sorry for her.

I waited some more. The sky in front of me grew paler every moment. I began to fear that something had happened to the sun. If I hadn't known so much astronomy I should have said that he had changed his mind and gone back again. I rose with the idea of seeing into things. He had been up, apparently, for hours; he had got up at the back of me. It seemed to be nobody's fault. I put my pipe into my pocket and strolled round to the front. The cow was still there; she was pleased to see me, and started bellowing again.

I heard a sound of whistling. It proceeded from a farmer's boy. I hailed him, and he climbed a gate and came to me across the field. He was a cheerful youth. He nodded to the cow, and hoped she had had a good night; he pronounced it "nihet."

"You know the cow?" I said.

"Well," he explained, "we don't precisely move in the same set. Sort o' business relationship, more like—if you understand me?"

Something about this boy was worrying me. He did not seem like a real farmer's boy. But, then, nothing seemed quite real this morning. My feeling was to let things go.

"Whose cow is it?" I asked.

He stared at me.

"I want to know to whom it belongs," I said. "I want to restore it to the owner."

"Excuse me," said the boy, "but where do you live?"

He was making me cross. "Where do I live?" I retorted. "Why, in this cottage. You don't think I've got up early and come from a distance to listen to this cow? Don't talk so much. Do you know whose cow it is or don't you?"

"It's *your* cow," said the boy.

It was my turn to stare.

"But I haven't got a cow," I told him.

"Yus, you have," he persisted. "You've got that cow."

She had stopped bellowing for a moment. She was not a cow I felt I could ever take a pride in. At some time or other, quite recently, she must have sat down in some mud.

"How did I get her?" I demanded.

"The young lidy," explained the boy. "She came rahnd to our plice on Tuesday——"

I began to see light. "An excitable young lady—talks very fast—never waits for the answer?"

"With jolly fine eyes," added the boy, approvingly.

"And she ordered a cow?"

"Didn't seem to 'ave strength enough to live another dy withaht it."

"Any stipulation made concerning the price of the cow."

"Any what?"

"The young lady with the eyes, did she think to ask the price of the cow?"

"No sordid details was entered into, so far as I could 'ear," replied the boy.

They would not have been—by Robina. "Any hint let fall as to what the cow was wanted for?"

"The lidy give us to understand," said the boy, "that fresh milk was 'er idea."

That surprised me; that was thoughtful of Robina. "And this is the cow?"

"I towed her rahnd last night. I didn't knock at the door and tell yer abaht 'er, cos, to be quite frank with yer, there wasn't anybody in."

"What is she bellowing for?" I asked.

"Well," said the boy, "it's only a theory, o' course, but I should sy, from the look of 'er, that she wanted to be milked."

"But it started bellowing at half-past two," I argued. "It doesn't expect to be milked at half-past two, does it?"

"Meself," said the boy, "I've given up looking for sense in cows."

In some unaccountable way this boy was hypnotizing me. Everything had suddenly become out of place. The cow had suddenly become absurd; she ought to have been a milk-can. The wood struck me as neglected: there ought to have been notice-boards about: "Keep off the grass," "Smoking strictly prohibited"; there wasn't a seat to be seen. The cottage had surely got itself there by accident; where was the street? The birds were all out of their cages; everything was upside down.

"Are you a real farmer's boy?" I asked him.

"O' course I am," he answered. "What do yer tike me for—a hartist in disguise?"

It came to me. "What is your name?"

"'Enery—'Enery 'Opkins."

"Where were you born?"

"Camden Tahn."

Here was a nice beginning to a rural life! What place could be the country while this boy Hopkins was about? He would have given to the Garden of Eden the atmosphere of an outlying suburb.

"Do you want to earn an occasional shilling?" I put it to him.

"I'd rather it came reg'lar," said Hopkins. "Better for me kerrickter."

"You drop that Cockney accent and learn Berkshire, and I'll give you half a sovereign when you can talk it," I promised him.

"Don't, for instance, say 'ain't,'" I explained to him. "Say 'bain't.' Don't say 'The young lidy—she came rahnd to our plice'; say, 'The missy, 'er coomed down; 'er coomed and 'er says to the maister, 'er ses——' That's the sort of thing I want to surround myself with here. When you informed me that the cow was mine you should have said: 'Whoi, 'er be your cow surelie 'er be.'"

"Sure it's Berkshire?" demanded Hopkins. "You're confident about it?" There is a type that is by nature suspicious.

"It may not be Berkshire pure and undefiled," I admitted. "It is what in literature we term 'dialect.' It does for most places outside the twelve-mile radius. The object is to convey a feeling of rustic simplicity. Anyhow, it isn't Camden Town."

I started him with a shilling then and there, to encourage him. He promised to come round in the evening for one or two books, written by friends of mine, that I reckoned would be of help to him. And I returned to the cottage and set to work to rouse Robina.

Folly and Fools

A MAN of wit would often be very much at a loss without the company of fools. —La Rochefoucauld.

A wise fool is a worse fool than an ignorant fool.—Molière.

He who hath not a dram of folly in his mixture, hath pounds of much worse matter in his composition.—Charles Lamb.

Examinations are formidable even to the best prepared, for the greatest fool may ask more than the wisest man can answer.—C. C. Colton.

'Ain't we got all the fools in town on our side? And ain't that a big enough majority in any town?—Mark Twain.

There is a greatest Fool, as a superlative in every kind: and *the* most Foolish man in the Earth is now indubitably living and breathing, and did this morning, or lately, eat breakfast.—Carlyle.

The Stake and the Plumb-Line

A woman's strong faith, a man's grit and their triumph

By SIR GILBERT PARKER

SHE went against all good judgment in marrying him. She cut herself off from her own people, from the life in which she had been an alluring and beautiful figure, popular beyond any other girl of her brief epoch of girlhood, witty and full of a humour not to be suppressed. Washington had never had two such seasons as those in which she moved, for the diplomatic circle who had had "the run of the world" knew her value, and were not content without her. She might have made a brilliant match with one ambassador thirty years older than herself—she was but twenty-two—and there were at least six attachés and secretaries of legation who entered upon a tournament for her heart and hand. All her fine faculties of tact and fairness, of harmless strategy and unexpected humour, were needed to keep her cavaliers constant and hopeful to the last; but she never faltered, and she did not fail. The faces of old men brightened when they saw her; and one or two ancient figures, who for years had been seldom seen at social functions, now came when they knew she was to be present. There were, of course, a few women who said she would coquette with any male from nine to ninety, but no man ever said so; and there was none—from first to last—but smiled with pleasure at even the mention of her name, so had her vivacity, intelligence, and fine sympathy conquered them. She was a social artist by instinct. In their hearts, they all recognized how fair and impartial she was; and she drew out of every man the best that was in him. The few women who did not like her said that she chattered; but the truth was, she made other people talk by swift suggestion or delicate interrogation.

After the blow fell, Freddy Hartzman put the matter succinctly, and told the truth faithfully, when he said: "The first time I met her, I told her all I'd ever done that could be told, and all I wanted to do, including a resolve to carry her off to some desert place and set up a kingdom of two. I don't know how she did it. I was like a tap, and poured myself out; and when it was all over I thought she was the best talker I'd ever heard. But yet she'd done nothing except look at me and listen, and put in a question here and there that was like a baby asking to see your watch. Oh, she was a lily-flower, was Sally Seabrook, and I've never been sorry I told her all my little story. It did me good. Poor darling! It makes me sick sometimes when I think of it. Yet she'll win out all right—a hundred to one she'll win out. She was a star."

Freddy Hartzman was in an embassy of repute; he knew the chancelleries and salons of many nations, and was looked upon as one of the ablest and shrewdest men in the diplomatic service. He had written one of the best books on international law in existence; he talked English like a native; he had published a volume of delightful verse, and had omitted to publish several others, including a tiny volume which Sally Seabrook's charms had inspired him to write. His view of her was shared by most men who knew the world, and especially by the elderly men who had a real knowledge of human nature, among whom was a certain important member of the United States Executive, called John Appleton. When the end of all things at Washington came for Sally, these two men, by tacit consent, united to bear her up that her feet should not stumble upon the stony path of the hard journey she had undertaken.

Appleton was not a man of much speech, but his words had weight, for he was not only a Minister, but he came of an old family which had ruled the social destinies of a State, and had alternately controlled and disturbed its politics. On the day of the sensation, in the fiery cloud of which Sally disappeared, Appleton delivered him-

self of his mind in the matter, at a reception given by the President: "She will come back, and we will all take her back—be glad to have her back. She has the grip of a lever which can lift the eternal hills with the right pressure. Leave her alone—leave her alone. This is a democratic country; and she'll prove democracy a success before she's done."

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THE world knew that John Appleton had offered her marriage, and he had never hidden the fact. What they did not know was that of all the world—save her own father and mother, and Freddy Hartzman—she had told him what she meant to do before she did it. He had spoken plainly, bluntly, to her, with a voice that was blurred and a little broken, urging her against the course towards which she was set. It had not availed; and, realizing that he had come upon a powerful will underneath the sunny and so human surface, he had ceased to protest, to bear down upon her mind with his own iron force, through which there ran as fine an affection as was ever given to any woman, albeit he was fifty-five and she but twenty-two. When he realized that all the reasoning was wasted, that all worldly argument was vain, he made one last attempt—a forlorn hope.

"There is no position you cannot occupy," he said. "You have the perfect gift in private life, and you have a public gift. You have a genius for ruling. Say, my dear, don't wreck it all. I know you are not for me, but there are better men in the country, and out of it, than I am. Hartzman will be a great man one day—he wants you. Young Tilden wants you; he has millions, and he will never disgrace them or you, the power which they can command, and the power which you have. And there are others. Your people have told you they will turn you off; the world will say things—will rend you. There is nothing so popular for the moment as the fall of a favourite. But that's nothing—it's nothing at all, compared with the danger to yourself. I didn't sleep last night as I thought of it. Yet I'm glad you wrote me. It gave me time to think, and I can give you the truth as I see it. Haven't you thought that he will drag you down—down—down, wear out your soul, break and sicken your life, destroy your beauty? You are beautiful, my dear, beyond what the world sees, even. Give it up; say, give it up, and don't break our hearts. There are too many people loving you for you to sacrifice them—and yourself, too. You've had such a good time."

"It's been like a dream," she interrupted, in a far-away voice; "like a dream, these two years."

"And it's been such a good dream," he urged, "and you will only go to a bad one—from which you will never wake. The thing has fastened on him; he will never give it up. And penniless, too—his father has cast him off. My girl, it's impossible! Listen to me. There's no one on earth that would do more for you than I would—no one!"

"Dear, dear friend!" she cried with a sudden impulse, and caught his hand in hers and kissed it before he could draw it back. "You are so true, and you think you are right. But—but"—her eyes took on a deep, steady, far-away look—"but I will save him, and we shall not be penniless in the end. Meanwhile, I have seven hundred dollars a year of my own; no one can touch that. Nothing can change me now; and I have promised."

When he saw her fixed determination, he made no further protest, but asked that he might help her, be with her the next day when she was to take a step which all the experience of the world would say must lead to sorrow and a miserable end.

The step she took was to marry Jim Templeton, the drunken, cast-off son of a millionaire senator from Kentucky, who controlled railways and owned a bank, and had so resented his son's inebriate habits that for four years he had never permitted Jim's name to be mentioned in his presence. Jim had had twenty thousand dollars left him by his mother, and a small income of three hundred dollars from an investment which had been made for him when a little boy. And this had carried him on; for, drunken as he was, he had sense enough to eke out the money, limiting himself to three thousand dollars a year. He had four thousand dollars and his tiny income of three hundred left when he went to Sally Seabrook—after having been sober for a month—and begged her to marry him.

Before dissipation had made him look ten years older than he was, there had been

no handsomer man in all America. Even yet, he had a remarkable face, long, delicate, with dark-brown eyes, as fair a forehead as man could wish, and black, waving hair, streaked with grey—grey, though he was but twenty-nine years of age.

When Sally was fifteen and he twenty-two, he had fallen in love with her and she with him; and nothing had broken the early romance. He had captured her young imagination, and had fastened his image on her heart. Her people, seeing the drift of things, had sent her to school on the Hudson, and the two did not meet for two years. Then came a stolen interview, and a fastening of the rivets of attraction, for Jim had gifts of a wonderful kind. He knew his Horace and Anacreon, and Heine and Lamartine and Dante in the originals, and a hundred others; he was a speaker of power and grace, and he had a clear, strong head for business. He was also a lawyer, and was junior attorney to the great business. It was because he had the real business gift, not because he had a brilliant and scholarly mind, that his father took him into his great concerns, and was the more unforgiving when he gave way to temptation. Otherwise, he would have pensioned Jim off and dismissed him from his mind as a useless, insignificant person, for Horace, Anacreon, and philosophy and history were to him the recreations of the feeble-minded. He had set his heart on Jim, and what Jim could do and would do by and by in the vast financial concerns he controlled; but Jim had disappointed him beyond calculation.

In the early days of their association Jim had left his post and taken to drink at critical moments in their operations. At first high words had been spoken; then there came the strife of two dissimilar natures, and both were headstrong, and each proud and unrelenting in his own way. Then, at last, had come the separation, irrevocable and painful; and Jim had flung out into the world, a drunkard who, sober for a fortnight or a month, or three months, would go off on a spree in which he quoted Sappho and Horace in taverns, and sang bacchanalian songs with a voice meant for the stage—a throw-back of an ancestor who had sung upon the English stage a hundred years before. Even in his cups Jim Templeton was a man marked out from his fellows—distinguished and very handsome even after his darling vice had submerged him. Society, however, had ceased to recognize him for a long time, and he did not seek it. For two or three years he practised law now and then. He took cases—preferably criminal cases, for which very often he got no pay; but that, too, at last ceased. Now, in his quiet, sober intervals he read omnivorously and worked out problems in physics, for which he had a taste, until the old appetite surged over him again. Then his spirits rose, and he was the old brilliant talker, the joyous galliard, until, in due time, he became lethargically drunk.

In one of his sober intervals he had met Sally Seabrook in the street. It was the first time in four years, for he had avoided her; and though she had written to him once or twice, he had never answered her—shame was in his heart. Yet all the time the old song was in Sally's ears. Jim Templeton had touched her in some distant and intimate corner of her nature where none other had reached; and in all her gay life, when men had told their tale of admiration in their own way, her mind had gone back to Jim, and what he had said under the magnolia-trees; and his voice had drowned all others. She was not blind to what he had become, but a deep belief possessed her that she of all the world could save him. She knew how futile it would look to the world, how wild a dream it looked even to her own heart, how perilous it was, but, play upon the surface of things as she had done so much and so often in her brief career, she was seized of convictions having origin, as it might seem, in something beyond herself.

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SO when she and Jim met in the street, the old true thing rushed upon them both, and for a moment they stood still and looked at each other. As they might look who say farewell for ever, so did they dwell upon each other's faces. That was the beginning of the new epoch. A few days more, and Jim came to her and said that she alone could save him; and she meant him to say it, had led him to the saying, for the same conviction was burned deep in her own soul. She knew the awful risk she was taking, that the step must mean social ostracism, and that her own people would be no kinder to her than society; but she gasped a prayer, smiled at Jim as though all were well, laid her plans, made

him promise her one thing on his knees, and took the plunge.

Her people did as she expected. She was threatened with banishment from hearth and home, with disinheritance, but she pursued her course; and the only person who stood with her and Jim at the altar—she would be married in church, so sacred the task to which she had set herself—was John Appleton, who would not be denied, and who had such a half-hour with Jim before the ceremony as neither of them forgot in the years that the locust ate thereafter. As he knelt beside her awaiting the benediction, a sudden sense of the enormity of this act came upon him; and for her sake he would have drawn back then, had it not been too late. He realized that it was a crime to put this young, beautiful life in peril; that his own life was a poor, contemptible thing, and that he had been possessed of the egotism of the selfish and the young.

But the thing was done, and a new life was begun. Before they were launched upon it, however—before society had fully grasped the sensation, or they had left upon their journey to the Far North of Canada, where Sally intended they should work out their problem, and make their home, far and free from all old associations—a curious thing happened. Jim's father sent an urgent message to Sally to come to him. When she came, he told her she was mad, and asked her why she had thrown her life away.

"Why have you done it?" he said. "You—you knew all about him; you might have married the best man in the country. You could rule a kingdom; you have beauty and power, and make people do what you want. And you've got a sot!"

"He is your son," she answered quietly.

She looked so beautiful and so fine as she stood there, fearless and challenging before him, that he was moved. But he would not show it.

"He was my son—when he was a man," he retorted grimly.

"He is the son of the woman you once loved," she answered.

The old man turned his head away.

"What would she have said to what you did to Jim?"

He drew himself round sharply. Her dagger had gone home, but he would not let her know if he could help it.

"Leave her out of the question; she was a saint," he said roughly.

"She cannot be left out—nor can you. He got his temperament naturally; he inherited his weakness. From your grandfather, from her father. Do you think you are in no way responsible?"

He was silent for a moment, but then said stubbornly:

"Why—why have you done it? What's between him and me can't be helped. We are father and son; but you—you had no call, no responsibility."

"I love Jim—I always loved him, ever since I can remember—as you did. I see my way ahead. I will not desert him. No one cares what happens to him—no one but me. Your love wouldn't stand the test—mine will."

"Your folks have disinherited you. You have almost nothing—and I will not change my mind. What do you see ahead of you?"

"Jim—only Jim—and God."

Her eyes were shining, her hands were clasped together at her side in the tenseness of her feeling, her indomitable spirit spoke in her face.

Suddenly the old man brought his fist down on the table with a bang.

"It's a crime! Oh, it's a crime, to risk your life so! You ought to have been locked up. I'd have done it."

"Listen to me," she said quietly. "I know the risk. But do you think that I could have lived my life out feeling that I might have saved Jim, and didn't try? You talk of beauty and power and ruling; you say what others have said to me. Which is the greater thing: to get what pleases one, or to work for something which is more to one than all else in the world? To save one life, one intellect, one great man—oh, he has the making of a great man in him!—to save a soul, would not life be well lost, would not love be well spent, in doing it?"

"Love's labour lost!" said the old man slowly, cynically, but not without emotion.

"I have ambition," she continued. "No girl was ever more ambitious, but my ambition is to make the most and best of myself. Place? Jim and I will hold it yet. Power? It shall be as it must be; but Jim and I will work for it to fulfil ourselves. For me—ah, if I can save him—and I mean to do so!—do you think that I would not then have my heaven on earth?

You want money, money, money, power, and to rule; and these are to you the best things in the world. I make my choice differently, though I would have these other things if I could, and I hope I shall. But Jim first—Jim first—your son, Jim, my husband, Jim."

The old man got to his feet slowly; she had him at bay.

"But you are great," he said, "great! It is an awful stake—awful! But if you win, you'll have what money can't buy. And listen to me. We'll make the stake bigger. It will give it point, too, in another way. If you keep Jim sober for four years from the day of your marriage, on the last day of that four years I'll put in your hands for you and him, or for your child—if you have one—five millions of dollars. I am a man of my word. While Jim drinks, I won't take him back; he's disinherited. I'll give him nothing now or hereafter. Save him for four years—if he can do that he will do all—and there's five million as sure as the sun's in heaven. Amen and amen!"

He opened the door. There was a strange, soft light in her eyes as she came to go.

"Aren't you going to kiss me?" she said, looking at him whimsically.

He was disconcerted. She did not wait, but reached up and kissed him on the cheek.

"Good-bye," she said, with a smile. "We'll win the stake. Good-bye."

An instant, and she was gone. He shut the door, then turned and looked in a mirror on the wall. Abstractedly he touched the cheek she had kissed. Suddenly a change passed over his face. He dropped in a chair, and his fist struck the table as he said:

"By God, she may do it—she may do it! But it's life and death—it's life and death!"

Society had its sensation, and then the veil dropped. For a long time none looked behind it, except Jim's father. He had too much at stake not to have his telescope upon them. A detective followed them to keep Jim's record. But this they did not know.

II

FROM the day they left Washington, Jim put his life and his fate in his wife's hands. He meant to follow her judgment, and, self-willed and strong in intellect as he was, he said that she should have a fair chance of fulfilling her purpose. There had been many pourparlers as to what Jim should do. There was farming. She set that aside because it meant capital, and it also meant monotony and loneliness; and capital was limited, and monotony and loneliness were bad for Jim, deadening an active brain which must not be deprived of stimulants—stimulants of a different sort, however, from those which had heretofore mastered it. There was the law. But Jim would have to become a citizen of Canada, change his flag, and where they meant to go—to the outskirts—would offer few opportunities for the law, and with not enough to do there would be danger. Railway construction? That seemed good in many ways, but Jim had not the professional knowledge necessary—his experience with his father had been financial, not practical workmanship. Above all else he must have responsibility, discipline, and strict order in his life.

"Something that will be good for my natural vanity, and knock the nonsense out of me," Jim agreed as they drew farther and farther away from Washington and the past, and nearer and nearer to the Far North and their future.

Since their marriage there had come into Sally's face that illumination which only belongs to souls possessed of an idea greater than themselves, outside themselves—saints, patriots; faces which have been washed in the salt tears dropped for others' sorrows, and lighted by the fire of self-sacrifice.

What did Jim's life mean?—it was only one in the millions coming and going, and every man must work out his own salvation. Why should she cramp her soul to this one issue when the same soul could spend itself upon the greater motives and in the larger circle? A wide world of influence had opened up before her, position, power, adulation could have been all hers, as John Appleton and Jim's father had said. She might have moved in well-trodden ways, through gardens of pleasure, lived a life where all would have been made easy, where she would be shielded at every turn, and her beauty would be flattered by luxury into a constant glow. She was not so primitive, so unintellectual, not to have thought of all this, else her decision would have had less importance; she would have been no more than an infatuated, emotional

woman with a touch of second-class drama in her nature. She had thought of it all, and she had made her choice.

She had a heart and mind for great issues. She believed that Jim had a big brain, and would and could accomplish great things. She knew that he had in him the strain of hereditary instinct. His mother's father had ended a brief life in a drunken duel on the Mississippi, and Jim's boyhood had never had discipline or direction, or any strenuous order. He might never acquire order, and the power that order and habit and the daily iteration of necessary thoughts and acts bring; but the prospect did not appal her. She had taken the risk with her eyes wide open; had set her own life and happiness in the hazard. But Jim must be saved—must be what his talents, his genius, entitled him to be. And the long game must have the long thought.

As they drew into the great Saskatchewan Valley, she gave him his course. As a private he must join the mounted police, the red-coated riders of the plains, and work his way up through every stage of responsibility, beginning at the foot of the ladder.

She believed that he would agree with her proposal; but her hands clasped his a little more firmly and solicitously—there was a faint, womanly fear at her heart—as she asked him if he would do it.

His face fell for a moment when she made the suggestion, but it cleared presently, and he said, with a dry laugh:

"Well, I guess they must make me a sergeant pretty quick. I'm a colonel in the Kentucky Carbineers!"

She laughed too; then for a moment afterwards, woman-like, wondered if she were right, and was a little frightened. But that was only because she was not self-opinionated, and was more anxious than any woman in all the north land.

It happened as Jim said; he was made a sergeant at once—Sally managed that; for, when it came to the point, and she saw the conditions in which the private lived, and realized that Jim must be one of them, and clean out the stables, and groom his horse and the officers' horses, and fetch and carry, her heart failed her, and she thought that she was making her remedy needlessly heroical. So she went to see the Commissioner, who was on a tour of scrutiny on their arrival at the post, and, as better men than he had done in more knowing circles, he fell under her spell. If she had asked for a lieutenancy he would probably have corrupted some member of Parliament into securing it for Jim.

But Jim was made a sergeant, and the Commissioner and the captain of the troop kept their eyes on him. So did other members of the troop, who did not quite know their man, and attempted, figuratively, to pinch him here and there. They found that his actions were greater than his words, and both were in perfect harmony in the end, though his words often seemed pointless to their minds until they understood that they had conveyed truths through a medium more like a heliograph than a telephone. By and by they began to understand his heliographing; and when they did that they began to swear by him—not at him.

In time it was found that the troop never had a better disciplinarian than Jim. He knew when to shut his eyes, and when to keep them open. To non-essentials he kept his eyes shut; to essentials he kept them very wide open. There were some men of good birth from England and elsewhere among them, and these mostly understood him first. But they all understood Sally from the beginning, and after a little they were glad enough to be able to come, on occasion, to the five-roomed little house near the barracks and hear her talk, then answer her questions, and, as men had done at Washington, open out their hearts to her.

They noticed, however, that while she made them barley-water, and all kinds of soft drinks from citric acid, sarsaparilla, and the like, and had one special drink of her own invention which she called cream-nectar, no spirits were to be had. They also noticed that Jim never drank a drop of liquor; and by and by, one way or another, they got a glimmer of the real truth before it became known who he really was, or anything of his story. Interest in the two and in Jim's reformation spread through the country, while Jim gained reputation as the smartest man in the force, officers or privates.

They were on the outskirts of civilization; as Jim used to say, "One step ahead of the procession." Jim's duty was to guard the columns of settlements and progress, and to see that every man got his own rights and not more than his rights;

that justice should be the plumb-line of march and settlement. His principle was embodied in certain words which he quoted once to Sally from the prophet Amos: "*And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb-line.*"

On the day that Jim became a lieutenant, his family increased by one. It was a girl, and they called her Nancy, after Jim's mother. It was the anniversary of their marriage, and, so far, Jim had won, with what fightings and strugglings and wrestlings of the spirit only Sally and himself knew. She knew as well as he, and always saw the storm coming before it broke—a restlessness, then a moodiness, then a hungry, eager, helpless look, and afterwards an agony of longing, a feverish desire to break away and get the thrilling thing that stilled this demon within him.

There had been moments when his doom seemed certain. He knew and she knew that if he once got drunk again he would fall never to rise again—humiliation would break his spirit. On one occasion, after a hard, long hungry ride he was half mad with desire, but even as he seized the flask that was offered to him by his only enemy—the captain of B Troop at the next station east of them—there came a sudden call to duty, two hundred Indians having gone upon the war-path. It saved him, it broke the spell. He had to mount and away, with the antidote and stimulant of responsibility driving him on.

Another occasion was equally perilous to his safety. They had been idle for days in a hot week in summer, waiting for orders to return from the rail-head, where they had gone to quell a riot, and where drink and hilarity were common. Suddenly, more suddenly than it had ever come, the demon of his thirst had Jim by the throat. Sergeant Sewell, of the grey stubble head, who loved him more than his sour heart had loved anybody in all his life, was holding himself ready for the physical assault he must make upon his superior officer if, and when, he raised a glass to his lips, when salvation came once again. An accident had occurred far down the railway line, and the operator of the telegraph-office had that very day been stricken down with pleurisy and pneumonia. In despair, the manager had sent to Jim, eagerly hoping that he might help them, for the Riders of the Plains were a sort of Court of Appeal for every trouble in the Far North.

Instantly Jim was in the saddle with his troop. Out of curiosity he had learned telegraphy when a boy, as he had learned many things. Arrived at the scene of the accident, he sent swift messages and received them—by sound, not on paper as did the official operator—to the amazement and pride

THE SHY SCABIOSA

TO a scabiosa blossom
(Note my botany, I pray)
Sped a bee, within whose bosom
Love, the conqueror, held sway.
On his bee's knees, ardent, yearning,
He proceeded to unfold,
Mingled with his passion, learning,
As he buzzed the story old:
"Flora pulchra et formosa!"
Said the scabiosa,
"Oh, sir!"

SUCH a cultivated wooing,
Couched in such top-lofty toff,
Wellnigh proved the flower's undoing
Though she strove to fend him off.
"Be my own," he thickly bumbled,
"Yield your petals to my kiss . . .
Never has my heart been humbled
By a love as great as this."
"I am far too young and so, sir,"
Sighed the scabiosa,
"Go, sir!"

QUICKLY then the bee deserted,
For his love was but a pose,
And, they say, he more than flirted
With a wild and rambling rose.
This the moral of my ditty:
Should we look on Life askance,
Slamming shut the door of Pity
In the face of gay Romance,
Never letting Love come closer
Like the scabiosa?
NO, sir! *G. S. C.*

of the troop. Then, between caring for the injured in the accident, against the coming of the relief train, and nursing the sick operator through the dark moments of his dangerous illness, he passed a crisis of his own disease triumphantly; but not the last crisis.

So the first and so the second and third years passed in safety.

III

"PLEASE, I want to go too, Jim."

Jim swung round and caught the child up in his arms.

"Say, how dare you call your father *Jim?* Tell me that."

"It's what mummy calls you—it's pretty."

"I don't call her mummy because you do, and you mustn't call me *Jim* because she does. Do you hear?"

The whimsical face lowered a little, then the rare and beautiful dark blue eyes raised slowly, shaded by the long lashes, and the voice said demurely:

"Yes—Jim."

"Nancy, Nancy," said a voice from the corner in reproof, mingled with suppressed laughter. "Nancy, you mustn't be saucy. You must say 'father' to——"

"Yes, mummy, dear. I'll say 'father' to—your Jim."

"You imp—you imp of delight!" said Jim, as he strained the dainty little lass to his breast, while she appeared interested in a wave of his black hair which she curled around her finger.

Sally came forward with the little parcel of sandwiches she had been preparing, and put them in a saddlebag lying on a chair at the door, in readiness for the journey Jim was about to make. Her eyes were glistening, and her face had a heightened colour. The three years which had passed since she married had touched her not at all to her disadvantage, rather to her profit. She looked not an hour older. Motherhood had only added to her charm, giving it a delightful gravity. The prairie life had given a shining quality to her handsomeness, an air of depth and firmness, an exquisite health and clearness to the colour in her cheeks. Her step was light as Nancy's, elastic and buoyant—a gliding motion which gave a sinuous grace to the movements of her body. There had also come into her eyes a vigilance such as deaf people possess, a sensitive observation imparting a deeper intelligence to the face.

Here was the only change by which you could guess the story of her life. Her eyes were like the ears of an anxious mother who can never sleep till every child is abed; whose sense is quick to hear the faintest footstep without or within; and who, as years go on, and her children grow older and older, must still lie awake hearkening for the late footstep on the stair. In Sally's eyes was the story of the past three years; of love and temptation and struggle, of watchfulness and yearning and anxiety; of determination and inviolable hope. Her eyes had a deeper look than that in Jim's. Now, as she gazed at him, the maternal spirit rose up from the great well of protectiveness in her, and engulfed both husband and child. There was always something of the maternal in her eyes when she looked at Jim. He did not see it. He only saw the wonderful blue, and the humour—the humour which had helped him over such difficult places these past three years.

The baby Nancy had done much to brace her faith in the future, and comfort her anxious present. The child had intelligence of a rare order. She would lie by the half-hour on the floor, turning over the leaves of a book without pictures, and before she could speak would read from the pages in a language all her own. She made a fairy world for herself, peopled by characters to whom she gave names, to whom she assigned curious attributes and qualities. They were as real to her as though flesh and blood, and she was never lonely, and never cried; and she had buried herself in her father's heart. She had drawn to her the roughest men in the troop, and for old Sewell, the grim sergeant, she had a specially warm place.

"You can love me if you like," she had said to him at the very start, with the egotism of childhood, but made haste to add: "Because I love you, Gri-Gri." She called him Gri-Gri from the first, but they only knew long after that "Gri-Gri" meant "grey-grey," to signify that she called him after his grizzled hairs.

What she had been in the life-history of Sally and Jim they both knew. Jim regarded her with an almost superstitious feeling. Sally was his strength, his sup-

port, his inspiration, his bulwark of defence; Nancy was the charm he wore about his neck—his mascot, he called her. Once, when she was ill, he had suffered as he had never done before in his life. He could not sleep, nor eat, and went about his duties like one in a dream. When his struggles against his enemy were fiercest he kept saying over her name to himself, as though she could help him. Yet always it was Sally's hand he held in his darkest hours, in his brutal moments; for in this fight between appetite and will there are moments when only the animal seems to exist, and the soul disappears in the glare and gloom of the primal emotions, a throw-back to savagery. Nancy he called his "lucky sixpence," but he called Sally his "guinea-girl."

¶

FROM first to last his whimsicality never deserted him. In his worst hours, some innate optimism and humour held him steady in his fight. It was not depression that possessed him at the worst, but the violence of an appetite most like a raging pain which men may endure with a smile upon their lips. He carried in his face the story of a conflict, the aftermath of bitter experience, and through all there pulsed the glow of experience. He had grown handsomer, and the graceful decision of his figure, the deliberate certainty of every action, heightened the force of a singular personality. As in the eyes of Sally, in his eyes was a long, reflective look which told of things overcome, and yet of dangers present. His lips smiled often, yet the eyes said: "I have lived, I have seen, I have suffered, and I must suffer more. I have loved, I have been loved under the shadow of the sword. Happiness I have had, and golden hours, but not peace—never peace. My soul has need of peace."

In the greater, deeper experience of their lives, the more material side of existence had grown less and less to them. Their home was a model of simple comfort and some luxury, though Jim had insisted that Sally's income should not be spent except upon the child, and should be saved for the child, their home being kept on his pay and on the tiny income left by his mother. With the help of an Indian girl, and a half-breed for outdoor work and fires and gardening, Sally had cared for the house herself. Ingenious and tasteful, with a gift for cooking, and an educated hand, she had made their little home as pretty as their few possessions would permit. Refinement covered all, and three or four score books were like so many friends to comfort her when Jim was away, like kind and genial neighbours next door when he was at home. From Browning she had written down in her long, sliding hand-writing, and hung up beneath Jim's looking-glass, the heartening words:

"One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

They had lived above the sordid, and there was something in the nature of his life to help them to it. He belonged to a small handful of men who had control over an empire, with an individual responsibility and influence not contained in the scope of their commissions. It was a matter of moral force and character, and of uniform, symbolical only of the great power behind, of the long arm of the State, of the insistence of the law, which did not rely upon force alone, but on the certainty of its administration. In such conditions, the smallest brain was bound to expand, to take on qualities of judgment and temperateness which would never be developed in ordinary circumstances.

It had not come to him all at once. His intellect at first stood in his way. His love of paradox, his deep observation, his insight, all made him inherently satirical, though not cruelly so; but satire had become pure whimsicality at last; and he came to see that, on the whole, the world was imperfect, but also, on the whole, was moving towards perfection rather than imperfection.

In all that he had changed a great deal. His heart was still the heart of a boy, but his intellect had sobered, softened, ripened, even in this secluded and seemingly unimportant life; as Sally had said and hoped it would. Sally's conviction had been right. But the triumph was not yet achieved. She knew it. On occasion, the tones of his voice told her, the look that came into his eyes proclaimed it to her, his feverish-

ness and restlessness, his burning eyes made it certain. How many a night had she thrown her arm over his shoulder, and sought his hand and held it, while in the dark silence, and wide-eyed, dry-lipped, and with a throat like fire, he had held himself back from falling! There was liquor in the house—the fight would not have been a fight without it. She had determined that he should see his enemy, and meet him in the plains and face him down, and he was never many feet away from his possible disaster. Yet for three years all had gone well. There was another year. Would he last out the course?

¶

AT first the thought of the stake for which she was playing, in terms of currency, with the head of Jim's father on every note, was much with her. The amazing nature of the offer of five millions of dollars stimulated her imagination, roused her; gold coins are counters in the game of success, signs and tokens. Money alone could not have lured her; but rather what it represented—power, width of action, freedom to help when the heart prompted, machinery for carrying out large plans, ability to surround with advantage those whom we love. So, at first, while yet the memories of Washington were much with her, the appeal of the millions was strong.

But, all through, the other thing really mastered her—the fixed idea that Jim must be saved. As it deepened, the other life that she had lived became like the sports in which we shared when children, full of vivacious memory, shining with impulse and the stir of life, but not to be repeated—days and deeds outgrown. So the light of one idea shone in her face.

When Nancy came, the lesser idea—the stake, took on a new importance; for now it seemed to her that there was a duty which she owed the child to secure for it its rightful heritage. Then Jim, too, appeared in a new light, as one who could never fulfil himself unless working through the natural channels of his birth, inheritance, and upbringing. Jim, drunken and unreliable, with broken will and fighting to find himself, the waste places were for him until he was the master of his will and emotions. Once, however, secure in ability to control himself, with cleansed brain and purpose defined, the widest field would still be too narrow for his talents, and the five, yes, the fifty millions of his father must be his!

She had never repented having married Jim; but twice in those three years she had broken down and wept as though her heart would break. There were times when Jim's nerves were shaken in his struggle against the unseen foe, and he had spoken to her querulously, almost sharply. Yet in her tears there was no reproach for him, rather for herself—the fear that she might lose her influence over him, that she could not keep him close to her heart, that he might drift away from her in the commonplaces and monotony of work and domestic life. Everything so depended on her being to him not only the one woman for whom he cared, but the woman without whom he could care for no other.

"O my God, give me his love," she had prayed. "Let me keep it yet a little while. For his sake, not for my own, let me have the power to hold his love. Make my mind always quiet, and let me blow neither hot nor cold. Help me to keep my temper sweet and cheerful, so that he will find the room empty where I am not, and his footsteps quicken when he comes to the door."

Twice had she poured out her heart so, in the agony of fear that she should lose favour in Jim's sight. She did not know how alluring she was in spite of the constant proofs offered her. She had had her will with all who came her way, from Governor to Indian brave. Once, in a journey they had made far north, soon after they came, she had stayed at a Hudson Bay Company's post for some days; while there came news of restlessness among the Indians, because of lack of food, and Jim had gone farther north to steady the tribes, leaving her with the factor and his wife and a half-breed servant.

While she and the factor's wife were alone in the yard of the post one day, an Indian chief, in war-paint and feathers, entered suddenly, brandishing a long knife. He had been drinking, and there was danger in his black eyes. With a sudden inspiration she came forward quickly, nodded and smiled to him, and then pointed to a grindstone standing in the corner of the yard. As she did so, she saw Indians crowding into the gate, armed with knives, guns, bows and arrows. She beckoned to Arrowhead, and he followed her to the grindstone. She poured some water on

the wheel and began to turn it, nodding at the now impassive Indian to begin. Presently he nodded also, and put his knife on the stone. She kept turning steadily, singing to herself the while, as with anxiety she saw the Indians drawing closer and closer in from the gate. Faster and faster she turned, and at last the Indian lifted his knife from the stone. She reached out her hand with simulated interest, felt the edge with her thumb, the Indian looking darkly at her the while. Presently, after feeling the edge himself, he bent over the stone again, and she went on turning the wheel, still singing softly. At last he stopped again and felt the edge. With a smile, which showed her fine white teeth, she said: "Is that for me?" making a significant sign across her throat at the same time.

The old Indian looked at her grimly, then slowly shook his head in negation.

"I go hunt Yellow-Hawk to-night," he said. "I go fight. I like marry you when I come back. *How!*" he said, and turned away towards the gate.

Some of his braves held back, the blackness of death in their looks. He saw.

"My knife is sharp," he said. "The woman is brave. She shall live and eat; go and fight Yellow-Hawk, or starve and die."

Divining their misery, their hunger, and the savage thought that had come to them, she had whispered to the factor's wife to bring food, and the woman now came running out with two baskets full, and returned for more. Sally ran forward among the Indians, and put the food into their hands. With grunts of satisfaction they seized what she gave, and thrust it in their mouths, squatting on the ground. Arrowhead looked on, stern and immobile, but when at last she and the factor's wife sat down before the braves with confidence and an air of friendliness, he sat down also; yet, famished as he was, he would not touch the food.

At last, Sally, realizing his proud defiance of hunger, offered him a little lump of pemmican and a biscuit, and with a grunt he took it from her hands and ate it. Then, at his command, a fire was lit, the pipe of peace was brought out, and Sally and the factor's wife touched their lips to it, and passed it on.

So was a new treaty of peace and loyalty made with Arrowhead and his tribe by a woman without fear, whose life had seemed not worth a minute's purchase; and, as the sun went down, Arrowhead and his men went forth to make war upon Yellow-Hawk beside the Nettigon River. In this wise had her influence spread in the land.

Standing now with the child in his arms and his wife looking at him with a shining moisture of the eyes, Jim laughed outright. There came upon him a sudden sense of power, of aggressive force—the will to do! Sally understood, and came and laughingly grasped his arm.

"Oh, Jim," she said playfully, "you are getting muscles like steel! You hadn't these when you were colonel of the Kentucky Carbineers!"

"I guess I need them now," he said, smiling, and, with the child still in his arms, drew her to a window looking northward.

As far as the eye could see, nothing but snow, like a blanket, spread over the land. Here and there in the wide expanse a tree silhouetted against the sky, a tracery of eccentric beauty, and off, in the far distance, a solitary horseman riding towards the post—riding hard.

"It was root, hog, or die, with me, Sally," he continued, "and I rooted—— I wonder—that fellow on the horse—I have a feeling about him. See, he's been riding hard and long—you can tell by the heavy way the horse drops his legs. He sags a bit himself. But isn't it beautiful and all that out there—the real quintessence of life?"

The air was full of delicate particles of frost on which the sun sparkled; and though there was neither bird nor insect nor animal, nor stir of leaf, nor swaying of branch or waving grass, life palpitated in the air, energy sang its song in the footstep that crunched the frosty ground, that broke the crusted snow, in the delicate wind that stirred the flag by the barracks away to the left, hope smiled in the wide prospect over which the thrilling, bracing air trembled. Sally had indeed chosen aright.

"You had a big thought when you brought me here, guinea-girl," he added presently. "We are going to win out here"—he set the child down—"you and I and this lucky dollar." He took up his short fur coat. "Yes, we'll win, honey!"

Then, with a brooding look on his face, he added:

" 'The end comes as came the beginning,
And shadows fall into the past;
And the goal, is it not worth the winning,
If it brings us but home at the last?
While far through the pain of waste places,
We tread, 'tis a blossoming rod,
That drives us to grace from disgraces,
From the fens to the gardens of God!' "

He paused reflectively.

" It's strange that this life up here makes you feel that you must live a bigger life still, that this is only the wide porch to the great labour-house. It makes you want to do things. Well, we've got to win the stake first," he added, with a laugh.

" The stake is a big one, Jim—bigger than you think."

" You and her and me—me that was in the gutter."

" What is the gutter, dadsie?" asked Nancy.

" The gutter—the gutter is where the dish-water goes, midget," he answered, with a dry laugh.

" Oh, I don't think you'd like to be in the gutter," Nancy said solemnly.

" You have to get used to it first, miss," answered Jim.

Suddenly Sally laid both hands on Jim's shoulders and looked him in the eyes.

" You must win the stake, Jim. Think —*now!*"

She laid a hand on the head of the child. He did not know that he was playing for a certain five millions, perhaps fifty millions, of dollars. She had never told him of his father's offer. He was fighting only for salvation—for those he loved; for freedom. As they stood there, the conviction had come upon her that they had come to the last battlefield, that this journey which Jim now must take would decide all, would give them perfect peace or lifelong pain.

To her adjuration Jim replied by burying his face in her golden hair, and he whispered:

" Say, I've done near four years, my girl. I think I'm all right now—I think. This last six months, it's been easy—pretty fairly easy."

" Four months more, only four months more! God be good to us!" she said, with a little gasp.

If he held out for four months more, the first great stage in their life journey would be passed, the stake won.

" I saw a woman get an awful fall once," Jim said suddenly. " Her bones were broken in twelve places, and there wasn't a spot on her body without injury. They set and fixed up every broken bone except one. It was split down. They didn't dare perform the operation; she couldn't stand it. There was a limit to pain, and she had reached the boundary. Two years went by, and she got better every way, but inside her leg those broken pieces of bones were rubbing against each other. She tried to avoid the inevitable operation, but nature said, 'You must do it, or die in the end.' She yielded. Then came the long preparations for the operation. Her heart shrank, her mind got tortured. She'd suffered too much. She pulled herself together, and said: 'I must conquer this shrinking body of mine by my will. How shall I do it?' Something within her said: 'Think and do for others. Forget yourself.' And so, as they got her ready for her torture, she visited hospitals, agonized cripple as she was, and smiled and talked to the sick and broken, telling them of her own miseries endured and dangers faced, of the boundary of human suffering almost passed; and so she got her courage for her own trial. And she came out all right in the end. Well, that's the way I've felt sometimes. But I'm ready for my operation now whenever it comes, and it's coming, I know. Let it come when it must."

There came a knock at the door, and presently entered Sewell.

" The Commissioner wishes you to come over, sir," he said.

" I was just coming, Sewell."

" Everything's ready, sir; but there's to be a change of orders—something happened somewhere—some bad job up in the Cree country, I think."

A few minutes later Jim was in the Commissioner's office. The murder of the Hudson Bay Company's man had been committed in the Cree country. The stranger whom Jim and Sally had seen riding across the plains had brought the news for thirty miles, word of the murder having been carried from point to point.

The Commissioner was uncertain what to do, as the Crees were restless through want of food and the absence of game, and a force sent to capture Arrowhead, the chief who had committed the murder, might precipitate trouble. Jim solved the problem by offering to go alone and bring

the chief in to the post. It was two hundred miles to the Cree encampment, and the journey had its double dangers.

Another officer was sent on the expedition for which Jim was preparing, and he made ready to go upon his lonely duty. His wife only knew three days after he had gone what the nature of his mission was.

IV

JIM made his journey in good weather with his faithful dogs alone, and came into the camp of the Crees armed only with a revolver. If he had gone with ten men there would have been an instant mêlée, in which he would have lost his life. This is what the chief had expected, had prepared for; but Jim was more formidable alone, with power in the distance behind him which could and would come, with force, and destroy the tribe if resistance was offered, than with fifty men. His tongue had a gift of terse and picturesque speech, powerful with a people who had the gift of imagination. With five hundred men ready to turn him loose in the plains without dogs or food, he carried himself with a watchful coolness and complacent determination which went home to their minds with great force.

For hours the struggle for the murderer went on, a struggle of will, of mind over inferior mind and matter.

Arrowhead was a chief whose will had never been crossed by his own people, and to master that will by a superior will, to hold back the destructive force which, to the ignorant minds of the braves, was only a natural force of defence, meant a task needing more than authority behind it. For the very fear of that authority put in motion was an incentive to present resistance—to stave off the day of trouble. The faces that surrounded Jim were thin with hunger, and the murder that had been committed by the chief had, as its origin, the foolish replies of the Hudson Bay Company's man to their demand for supplies. Arrowhead had killed him with his own hand.

But Jim Templeton was of a different calibre. Although he had not been told it, he realized that, indirectly, hunger was the cause of the crime, and might easily become the cause of another; for their tempers were sharper even than their appetites. Upon this he played; upon this he made an exhortation to the chief. He assumed that Arrowhead had become violent because of his people's straits, that Arrowhead's heart yearned for his people, and would make sacrifice for them. Now, if Arrowhead came quietly, he would see that supplies of food were sent at once, and that arrangements would be made to meet the misery of their situation. Therefore, if Arrowhead came freely he would have so much in his favour before his judges; if he did not come, then he must be brought by force if need be; and if they raised a hand to prevent it, then destruction would fall upon all—all save the women and children. The law must be obeyed.

As he ended his words a young brave sprang forward with his hatchet raised. Jim's revolver slipped down into his palm from his sleeve, and a bullet caught the brave in the lifted arm. The hatchet dropped to the ground.

Then Jim's eyes blazed, and he turned a look of anger on the chief, his face pale and hard.

"The stream rises above the banks; come with me, chief, or all shall drown. I am master, and I speak. Ye are hungry because ye are idle. Ye call the world yours, yet ye will not stoop to gather from the earth the fruits of the earth. Ye sit idle in the summer, and women and children die round you when winter comes. Because the game is gone, ye say. Must the world stand still because a handful of Crees need a hunting-ground? Must the maker of cities and the wonders of the earth who fill the land with plenty—must they stand far off, because the Crees and their chief would wander over a million acres, for each man a million, when by a hundred, ay, by ten, each white man would live in plenty—and make the land rejoice? See! Here is the truth. When the Great Spirit draws the game away, so that the hunting is poor, ye sit down and fill your hearts with murder, and in the blackness of your thoughts kill my brother. Idle and shiftless and evil ye are, while the earth cries out to give you of its plenty, a great harvest from the little seed, if ye will but dig and plant, and plough and sow, and reap and lend your backs to toil. Now, hear and heed. The end is come. For this once ye shall be fed—by the blood of my heart ye shall be fed!

And another year ye shall labour, and get the fruits of your labour, and not stand waiting, as it were, till a fish passes the spear, or a stag shall water at your door, that ye may slay and eat. The end is come, ye idle men. O chief, hearken! One of your braves would have slain me, even as you slew my brother—he one, and you a thousand. Speak to your people as I have spoken; and then come and answer for the deed done by your hand. And this I say that right shall be done between man and man. Speak!"

Jim had made his great effort—and not without avail. Arrowhead rose slowly, the cloud gone out of his face, and spoke to his people, bidding them wait in peace until food came, and appointing his son chief in his stead until his return.

"The white man speaks truth, and I will go," he said. "I will return," he continued, "if it be written so upon the leaves of the tree of Life; and if it be not so written, I will fade like a mist, and the tepees will know me not again. The days of my youth are spent, and my step no longer springs from the ground. I shuffle among the grass and the fallen leaves, and my eyes scarce know the stag from the doe. The white man is master—if he wills it, we shall die; if he wills it, we shall live. And this was ever so. It is in the tale of our people. One tribe ruled and the others were their slaves. If it is written on the leaves of the tree of Life that the white man rule us for ever, then it shall be so. I have spoken. Now, behold I go."

Jim had conquered; and together they sped away with the dogs through the sweet-smelling spruce-woods where every branch carried a cloth of white, and the only sound heard was the swish of a blanket of snow as it fell to the ground from the wide webs of green, or a twig snapped under the load it bore. Peace brooded in the silent and comforting forest, and Jim and Arrowhead, the Indian ever ahead, swung along, mile after mile, on their snowshoes, emerging at last upon the wide, white prairie.

A hundred miles of sun and fair weather, sleeping at night in the open in a trench dug in the snow, no fear in the thoughts of Jim, nor evil in the heart of the heathen man. There had been moments of watchfulness, of uncertainty, on Jim's part, the first few hours of the first night after they left the Cree reservation; but the conviction speedily came to Jim that all was well; for the chief slept soundly from the moment he lay down on his blankets between the dogs. Then Jim went to sleep as in his own bed, and, waking, found Arrowhead lighting a fire from a little load of sticks from the sledges. And between murderer and captor there sprang up the companionship of the open road which brings all men to a certain land of faith and understanding, unless they are perverted and vile. There was no vileness in Arrowhead. There were no handcuffs on his hands, no signs of captivity; they two ate out of the same dish, drank from the same basin, broke from the same bread.

One hundred miles of sun and fair weather, and then fifty miles of bitter, aching cold, with nights of peril from the increasing chill, so that Jim dared not sleep lest he would never wake again, but die benumbed and exhausted! Yet Arrowhead slept through all. Day after day so, and then ten miles of storm such as only come to the vast barren of the North lands; and woe to the traveller upon whom the icy wind and the blinding snow descended! Woe came upon Jim Templeton and Arrowhead the heathen!

¶

IN the awful struggle between man and Nature that followed, the captive became the leader. The craft of the plains, the inherent instinct, the feeling which was more than eyesight, became the only hope. One whole day to cover ten miles—an endless path of agony, in which Jim went down again and again, but came up, blinded by snow and drift, and cut as with lashes by the angry wind. At the end of the ten miles was a Hudson Bay Company's post and safety; and through ten hours had the two struggled towards it, going off at tangents, circling on their own tracks; but the Indian, by an instinct as sure as the needle to the pole, getting the direction to the post again in the moments of direct peril and uncertainty. To Jim the world became a sea of maddening forces which buffeted him; a whirlpool of fire in which his brain was tortured, his mind was shrivelled up; a vast army rending itself, each man against the other. It was a purgatory of music, broken by discords, and then at last—how sweet it all was, after the eternity of misery!—"Church bells and voices low," and Sally singing to him. Nancy's voice calling. Then

nothing but sleep—sleep, a sinking down millions of miles in an ether of drowsiness which thrilled him; and then—no more.

None who has suffered up to the limit of what the human body and soul may bear can remember the history of those distracted moments when the struggle became one between the forces in man and the forces in Nature, agonized body and smothered mind, with yet the divine intelligence of the created being directing, even though subconsciously, the fight.

How Arrowhead found the post in the mad storm he could never have told. Yet he found it, with Jim unconscious on the sledge and with limbs frozen, all the dogs gone but two—the leathers over the Indian's shoulders as he fell against the gate of the post with a shrill cry that roused the factor and his people within, together with Sewell, who had been sent out from headquarters to await Jim's arrival there. It was Sewell's hand which first felt Jim's heart and pulse, and found that there was still life left, even before it could be done by the doctor from headquarters, who had come to visit a sick man at the post.

For hours they worked with snow upon the frozen limbs to bring back life and consciousness. Consciousness came at last with half delirium, half understanding; as, emerging from the passing sleep of anæsthetics, the eye sees things and dimly registers them before the brain has set them in any relation to life or comprehension.

But Jim was aroused at last, and the doctor presently held to his lips a glass of brandy. Then from infinite distance Jim's understanding returned: the mind emerged, but not wholly, from the chaos in which it was travelling. His eyes stood out in eagerness.

"Brandy, brandy!" he sa d hungrily.

With an oath, Sewell snatched the glass from the doctor's hand, put it on the table, then stooped to Jim's ear and said hoarsely, "Remember your wife and child! For God's sake, sir, don't drink!"

Jim's head fell back, the fierce light went out of his eyes, the face became greyer and sharper. "Sally—Nancy—Nancy!" he whispered, and his fingers clutched vaguely at the quilt.

"He must have brandy, or he will die—the system is pumped out. He must be revived." The doctor reached again for the glass of spirits.

Jim understood now. He was on the borderland between life and death; his feet were at the brink.

"No—not—brandy, no! I will die first!" he moaned. "Sally—Sally, kiss me," he said faintly, from the middle world in which he was.

"Quick, the broth!" said Sewell, to the factor who had been preparing it. "Quick, while there's a chance." He stooped and called into Jim's ear: "For the love of God, wake up, sir! They're coming—they're both coming! Nancy's coming. They'll soon be here."

What matter that he lied! A life was at stake.

Jim's eyes opened again. The doctor was standing with the brandy in his hand. Half madly he reached out. "I must live until they come," he cried; "the brandy—ah, give it! Give it!—ah, God, save me from it!" he added, gasping, his lips trembling, his hands shaking.

Sewell held the broth to his lips. He drank a little, yet his face became greyer and greyer, a bluish tinge spread about his mouth.

"Have you nothing else, sir?" asked Sewell in despair.

The doctor put down the brandy, went quickly to his medicine-case, poured into a glass a few drops from a phial, came over again, and poured a little between the lips, then a little more, as Jim's eyes opened again; and at last every drop in the glass trickled down the sinewy throat.

Presently, as they watched him, the doctor said:

"It will not do—he must have brandy; it has life—food—in it."

Jim understood the words. He knew that if he drank the brandy the chances against his future were terrible. He had made his vow and he must keep it. He must win the stake—for Sally, for Nancy, for himself. He must win it or die. Yet the thirst was on him; his enemy had him by the throat again, was dragging him down. Though his body was so cold, his throat was on fire. But in the extremity of his strength his mind fought on—fought on, growing weaker every moment. He was having his last fight. They watched him with an aching anxiety, anger in the doctor's face—he had no patience with these forces arrayed against him.

At last the doctor whispered to Sewell:

"It's no use; he must have the brandy, or he can't live an hour!"

Sewell weakened; the tears fell down his rough, hard cheeks.

"It'll ruin him—it'll ruin him—it's ruin or death!"

"Trust a little more in God, and in the man's strength. Let us give him the chance. Force it down his throat—he's not responsible," said the physician, to whom saving life was more than all else.

Suddenly there appeared at the bedside Arrowhead, gaunt and weak, his face swollen, the skin of it broken by the whips of storm.

"He is my brother," he said, and, stooping, laid both hands, which he had held before the fire for a long time, on Jim's heart. "Take his feet, his hands, his legs, and his head, in your hands," he said to them all. "Life is in us; we will give him life." He knelt down and kept both hands on Jim's heart, while the others, even the doctor, awed by his act, did as they were bid. "Shut your eyes. Let your life go into him. Think of him and him alone. Now!" said Arrowhead, in a strange voice.

He murmured, and continued murmuring, his body drawing closer and closer to Jim's body, while in the deep silence, broken only by the chanting of his low, monotonous voice, the others pressed Jim's hands and head, and feet and legs—six men under the command of a heathen murderer.

The minutes passed. The colour came back to Jim's face, the skin of his hands filled up, they ceased twitching, his pulse got stronger, his eyes opened with a new light in them.

"I'm living, anyhow," he said at last, with a faint smile. "I'm hungry—broth, please!"

The fight was won, and the pagan murderer drew over the fire, and crouched down beside it, his back to the bed, impassive and still. They brought him a bowl of broth-and-bread. He drank it slowly, and placed the empty bowl between his knees. He sat there through the night, and, though they tried to make him lie down, he sat where he was until the morning.

As the light came in at the windows, Sewell touched him on the shoulder, and said, "He is sleeping now."

"I hear my brother breathe," answered Arrowhead. "He will live." All night he had listened, and had heard Jim's breath, as only a man who has lived in waste places can hear. "He will live. What I take with one hand, I give with the other."

He had taken the life of the factor; he had given Jim his life. And when he was tried three months later for murder, someone else said this for him, and the hearts of all, judge and jury, were so moved they knew not what to do.

But Arrowhead was never sentenced, for at the end of the first day's trial he lay down to sleep, and never waked again. He was found still and cold, and there was clasped in his hand a little doll which Nancy had given him on one of her many visits to the prison during her father's long illness. They found a piece of paper in his belt with these words in the Cree language: "With my hands on his heart at the post I gave him the life that was in me, saving but a little until now. Arrowhead, the Chief, goes to find life again where is the well at the root of the tree. *How!*"

V

ON the evening of the day that Arrowhead made his journey to "the well at the root of the tree," a stranger knocked at the door of Captain Templeton's cottage; then, without awaiting admittance, entered.

Jim was sitting with Nancy on his knee, her head against his shoulder, Sally at his side, her face alight with some inner joy. Before the knock came to the door, Jim had just said:

"Why do your eyes shine so, Sally? What's in your mind?" She had been about to answer, to say to him what had been swelling her heart with pride, yet she had not meant to tell him what he had forgotten—not till midnight. But the figure that entered the room, a big man, with deep-set eyes, a man of power who had carried everything before him in the battle of life, he answered for her.

"You have won the stake, Jim," he said in a hoarse voice. "You and she have won the stake, and I've brought it—brought it."

Before they could speak, he placed in Sally's hands bonds for five million dollars.

"Jim—Jim, son!" he burst out, turning to him. Then suddenly he sank into a chair, and, putting his head in his hands, sobbed aloud.

"My God! but I'm proud of you. Speak to me, Jim! You've broken me up."

He was ashamed of his tears, but he could not wipe them away.

"Father, dear old man!" said Jim, and put his hands on the broad shoulders.

Sally knelt down beside him, and took both the great hands from the tear-stained face, and laid them against her cheek. But presently Sally put Nancy on his knees.

"I don't like you to cry," the child said softly. "But to-day I cried too, 'cause my Indian man is dead."

The old man could not speak, but he put his cheek down to hers. After a minute, "Oh, but she's worth ten times that," he said, as Sally came close to him with the bundle he had thrust into her hands.

"What is it?" said Jim.

"It's five million dollars—for Nancy," she said.

"Five—million—what?"

"The stake, Jim. If you did not drink for four years—never touched a drop—we were to have five million dollars for the child, or for us."

"You never told him, then—you never told him that?" asked the old man.

"I wanted him to win without that," she said. "If he won, he would be the stronger; if he lost, it would not be so hard for him to bear."

The old man drew her down and kissed her cheek. He chuckled, though the tears were still in his eyes.

"You are a wonder—the tenth wonder of the world!" he blurted.

Jim stood staring at the bundle in Nancy's hands. "Five millions—five million dollars, for her!" he kept saying to himself.

"I said she's worth ten times that, Jim." The old man caught his hand and pressed it. "But it was a d—d near thing, I tell you," he added. "They tried to break me and my railways, and my bank. I had to fight the combination, and there was one day when I hadn't that five millions there, nor five dollars! Jim, they tried to break the old man!

"And if they'd broken me, they'd have made me out a scoundrel to her—to this wife of yours, who risked everything for both of us, for both of us, Jim—for she'd given up the world to save you, and she was playing like a soul in Hell for Heaven. If they'd broken me, I'd never have lifted my head again. When things were at their worst I played to save that five millions—her stake and mine—I played for that! I fought for it as a man fights his way out of a burning house. And I won—by the Eternal, I won! And it was by fighting for that five millions I saved fifty—fifty, son! They didn't break the old man, Jim. They didn't break him—not much!"

"There are giants in the world still," said Jim, his own eyes full as he squeezed his father's hand.

He knew now his father and himself, and he knew the meaning of all the bitter and misspent life of the old days. He and his father were on a level of understanding now.

"Are you a giant?" asked Nancy, peering up into her grandfather's eyes.

The old man laughed, then sighed.

"Perhaps I was once, more or less, my dear," saying to her what he meant for the other two. "Perhaps I was, but I've finished. I've had my last fight."

He looked at his son.

"I pass the game on to you, Jim. You can do it. I knew you could do it, as the reports came in this year. I've had a detective up here for four years—and I knew all. I had to do it. It was the devil in me. You've got to carry on the game, Jim; I'm done. I'll stay home and potter about. I want to go back to Kentucky, and build up the old place, and take care of it a bit—your mother always loved it. I'd like to have it as it was when she was there long ago. But I'll be ready to help you when I'm wanted, understand?"

"You want me to run things—your colossal schemes. You think——"

"I don't think. I'm old enough to *know!*"

* * * * *

He knew. Fifteen years have gone since then; and Jim Templeton, masterful, daring, and human, has preserved his inheritance, has kept the pledge that saved him. Sally—as she was, so she is, and her old lovers are her lovers still. Jim has no jealousy, for the world knows their story, and she may live in the White House yet.

"You Must Mean More"

By RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

YOU must mean more than just this hour,
You perfect thing so subtly fair,
Simple and complex as a flower,
Wrought with such planetary care;
How patient the eternal power
That wove the marvel of your hair.

How long the sunlight and the sea
Wove and rewove this rippling gold
To rhythms of eternity;
And many a flashing thing grew old
Waiting this miracle to be;
And painted marvels manifold.

Still with his work unsatisfied,
Eager each new effect to try,
The solemn artist cast aside,
Rainbow and shell and butterfly—
As some stern blacksmith scatters wide
The sparks that from his anvil fly.

How many shells, whorl within whorl,
Litter the marges of the sphere,
With wrack of unregarded pearl,
To shape that little thing, your ear;
Creation, just to make one girl,
Hath travailed with exceeding fear.

The moonlight of forgotten seas
Dwells in your eyes, and on your tongue
The honey of a million bees,
And all the sorrow of all song;
You are the ending of all these,
The world grew old to make you young.

All Time hath travelled to this rose—
To the strange making of this face
Came agonies of fires and snows;
And Death and April, nights and days
Unnumbered, unimagined throes,
Find in this flower their meeting-place.

Strange Artist, to my aching thought
Give answer; all the patient power
That to this perfect ending wrought—
Shall it mean nothing but this hour,
Say not that it is all for naught
Time brings Eternity a flower.

The Double Code

A Prodigal returns to judgment

By I. A. R. WYLIE

"WE'VE got to hope," the woman said, with a note of defiance in her voice. "To be sure of success is to win the first skirmish, and we've got to help Denis even with our thoughts. I can't—I won't think of failure." She went across the room and pushed aside the curtain. Down below in the valley she could see the lights of the town, and beyond that again, against the slope of the pine-covered hills, a dimly suggested building, ghost-like in the dusk, its grey immensity pricked out with gay, illuminated windows. She smiled proudly to herself. "It will be as Denis says," she went on. "People will come to Beachtown, first in their dozens and then in their hundreds. They will come incredulous and despairing, and they will go home healed and believing. Denis is so certain. There are no waters in the world to compare with this spring. And it's not as though he was the only one who was so sure. Everyone in Beachtown believes in him and in his discovery. Even little Miss James has put all her savings into the company, and Mr. Baillie, and—and everyone who counts. They say the clever young doctor is to make Beachtown. We say so, too, don't we?"

The old woman by the fireside did not move or look at her. She was very old, but of the two she seemed the more virile. She sat up, stiffly erect, disdaining the easy-backed chair, her mouth tight set, her eyes, from under the arched black brows, fixed relentlessly on the firelight. One thin hand was outstretched and gripped the Malacca cane with a strength that made the knuckles stand out like polished ivory. The younger woman came back and stood opposite her, her elbow on the mantelshelf, the girlish, over-delicate face supported in her hand.

"I think you, more than anyone, ought to find it easy to believe," she said gently.

Mrs. Denborough glanced up.

"Why?" she asked.

"Once—a long time ago—you and all Beachtown misjudged someone—someone you loved—and afterwards it was proved that he had been innocent all through. You were never able to atone. If that ever happened to me I should never dare disbelieve anyone again."

"That was my son." The old woman smiled grimly to herself. "Mothers are privileged—to forgive or withhold forgiveness."

"But never to withhold justice."

"You are sentimental, Alice."

Denis Milroy's wife crimsoned faintly, then she shook her fair head as though throwing off a momentary folly and, bending down, kissed the white, sunken cheek.

"It's Christmas time, so I suppose you are trying your best to be hard," she said lightly. "You are always trying to be hard, aren't you, mother?—trying to cover up each kindness that you do with a cold word. Ordinary outsiders never understand how such a harsh old woman came to adopt a poor orphaned baby and bring it up at such cost. Only I and, perhaps, Denis understand."

"Do you understand, my dear?"

Alice Milroy nodded gravely.

"When Denis asked me to be his wife he told me what you had done for him, all you had been to him. It had always seemed strange to me that women can adopt other women's children. In your case it meant a hard, bitter struggle, didn't it? But when I heard everything I guessed."

"What did you guess?"

"That it was your way to atonement."

Mrs. Denborough's face remained expressionless.

"You are a discerning child, Alice. Children tumble occasionally headlong into the truth. Isn't that your husband's step?"

"It's too early. The board meeting began at three. If only they make Denis chairman——"

"They will. Beachtown has just business capacity enough to know that it has none. If this enterprise is going to succeed it will only do so with Denis at the head. They know that, and they are too deeply involved to run risks. Trust them to thrust the weight of responsibility on someone else's shoulders. I know them."

Her laugh was caustic enough, but this time Alice Milroy joined in lightheartedly.

"I believe you're right. They feel that Denis is the man to see the thing through. And he will."

Her tone had changed so abruptly that the old woman looked up from her inscrutable study of the firelight. The door had opened and a man stood on the threshold. At first glance he seemed middle-aged. The shadows at the far end of the room accentuated the hollows under his eyes; there was something gaunt and inexpressibly harassed in the whole outline of a face which otherwise might have been pleasing and almost handsome. Only as he took a quick step forward was it to be seen that he was still young and possessed of youth's impulse and elastic vigour.

"I didn't mean to startle you," he said. "I came a little earlier than I thought possible. Something unexpected has happened."

His wife met him half-way across the room, and he caught her in his arms with the sudden passion that can be equally the expression of despair or intense relief. There was altogether something in his manner that seemed to frighten her—a smothered excitement partly triumphant and partly anxious. She drew back from him, her hands on his shoulders, and looked up into his flushed face.

"What has happened?"

"Nothing—at least, nothing unfortunate. The company is safely floated. The shares have been subscribed for twice over. All Beachtown is in with us for better or worse."

"And you?" she asked breathlessly.

"I am managing director and medical superintendent at the new sanatorium. It went like clockwork. It was put to the vote and it was carried unanimously. I couldn't have hoped for more."

"You couldn't have hoped for less," she retorted fervently. "You have made everything—risked everything. They owe you every hope of the future. What was Beachtown till you discovered the spring and worked in the face of ridicule and incredulity? You fought this battle for them, and they are just helping to reap the victory."

"I don't mind that. It wasn't altogether for myself I fought. It was a little for Beachtown and a little for the whole world."

"And a little for me?" she interrupted, smiling up at him.

"A great deal for you. You fought with me, both of you." He took her hands from his shoulders and kissed them reverently.

She made no answer, but her eyes shone in unfaltering hope through the sudden rush of tears, and with a quick-drawn sigh he turned from her and crossed to the still, motionless figure by the fireside.

"I have a letter for you, mother," he said.

"From whom?" she asked.

"From Andrew."

"My son? Give it me."

He hesitated. There was no change in her voice or manner. Save that she had drawn herself up more stiffly there was no sign that the dead had risen. She took the sealed envelope from his hand and laid it unopened on her knee.

"There is no stamp mark," was her only comment.

"It is an enclosure. Possibly Andrew—Mr. Denborough did not wish to frighten you. He wrote to the mayor and asked him to break the news to you. He is returning home."

"Ah!"

Denis Milroy looked down questioningly at the wizened, unmoved face and marvelled.

"He is returning home a great man," he said. "He has worked hard through all these silent years, and he has made his millions. You have cause to be more than proud—mother."

The last word came hesitatingly—with an effort—and Mrs. Denborough turned and laid her thin hand on his. For the first time her features expressed something—a deep, yet sternly controlled emotion.

"Things remain as they are and were, Denis," she said. "They will never change."

"I believed that," he returned gravely.

"But even if you had felt differently I should have understood. It is your son. He will come back to take his rightful place here and in your life. I have had my share." He felt his wife's hand slip into his, and his voice steadied. "The mayor and I talked things over," he went on more prosaically. "Of course, I am too young to know what happened, but I understand that Beachtown owes Mr. Denborough reparation for a serious wrong. Mr. Baillie—all the older generation—feels that nothing too much can be done to express their regret for their share in the past. There will be a deputation of the chief town folk to receive him and a banquet in his honour. Mr. Baillie hoped that you would be strong enough to be there——"

He broke off into a startled silence. Mrs. Denborough leant forward in her chair. Deliberately she tossed the unopened letter into the fire.

"By all means have your deputation," she said. "Give him his banquet. I shall not be there."

"You mean you wish to see him first alone?"

"I shall not receive him.

Husband and wife exchanged a swift glance of bewildered interrogation. Alice Milroy knelt down by the old woman and leant her face against her knee.

"Mother, you don't understand. Andrew, your son, is coming home. He went away years ago because you thought he had done something dishonourable. There was trouble about a cheque—don't you remember?—and no one would believe him. And then afterwards you found out how wrong you had all been. And now he is coming home great and rich, and we've got to make up to him, you most of all. Your distrust must have hurt most."

The old, sunken eyes rested for an instant on the eager young face, and passed on to the man beside her.

"It's as though Providence had intervened," Denis Milroy said, "that Mr. Denborough should come home now, in the nick of time. It's almost dramatic."

"Quite dramatic." The smile passed from her eyes to the lips which curled perceptibly. "Mr. Denborough's name will look well on a prospectus. And a few extra thousands is just what Beachtown wanted. By all means kill the fatted calf—only I do not wish to see my son."

"Mother, don't you realize he was innocent?"

"I have no more to say."

"Surely, it is least hard for you, his mother, to admit a wrong done. Surely you will be glad——"

She had walked painfully to the door, her stick tapping an unmoved accompaniment to her steps, and there she turned for an instant and looked back at them.

"I am an old woman, Denis Milroy," she said sternly. "I have atoned for my sins and for the sins of others. Leave me my peace."

She went out and the door closed sharply after her. Alice Milroy clung to her husband's arm. There were tears on her white cheeks.

"She doesn't understand," she exclaimed. "The shock was too much. She is so old, Denis. She can remember nothing but the imagined crime. And it will break her heart."

Milroy nodded.

"We'll have to make good," he said. "We'll have to make up to him, you and I together."

II

JOHN BAILLIE, recently acclaimed Mayor of Beachtown, spread himself largely before the fire. It seemed to him that his whole life culminated in this great hour. The evening clothes, worn for the second time in the course of a long career, were wholly symbolic of his future. The costly, exotic flowers which filled the large old-fashioned room, the lavish display of lights and silver, represented what was to come to Beachtown under his far-sighted administration. Beachtown was awake, Beachtown was to step out of her obscurity and take her place in the world. And it was he who had awakened her. He set his heavy shoulders against the mantelpiece and frowned portentously at the ceiling. Quite naturally and smoothly his thoughts wandered to the market place. It was an admirable spot for a statue. He saw himself distinctly, with one hand resting on an ivory pedestal, the other outstretched in an attitude of fearless encouragement, and underneath, perhaps on the pedestal itself, the words: "To the memory of Beachtown's Benefactor."

Opposite him, in a pose of ostentatious

ease, was Jeremy Hathers, Beachtown's premier greengrocer. In the last month he had been made town councillor, and the fact added somehow to Baillie's deepening content with life. For the two men had started their race to glory in the selfsame year, in the selfsame haberdasher's shop, and one was a mayor and the other only a town councillor.

There were ten other guests in the room: a representative group. Not one of Beachtown's important men had been omitted. The young doctor who had made the discovery of the healing spring was the only one who might in any way be regarded as an alien. No one knew very much about him. He had come down once a year to see Mrs. Denborough, and it was understood that he stood to her in the light of an adopted son. But he had lived and worked and married in London, and there was a vague feeling of resentment that a comparative stranger should have muddled himself up in the town's affairs, even for its advantage. The feeling expressed itself in various ways.

"It's lucky, young man, that you found wide-awake folk like us to back you up," Hathers was saying. "I know a good many places where they'd have let you argue yourself black in the face and not lifted a finger. But I saw your point at once, didn't I, Baillie?"

"There was never a moment's doubt in my mind," the mayor returned solemnly.

Denis Milroy bowed.

"The success of the whole scheme is in your hands," he said.

He spoke gravely, and if there was a line of bitterness about his mouth it was caused less by the unconscious slight as by a growing sense of his discomfort. He felt out of place. The men who surrounded him were middle-aged. They knew their host had been intimately if painfully connected with him in the past. He was out of it.

John Baillie's voice rose above the subdued conversation.

"Andrew Denborough was always a man of refinement," he said. "Now I come to think of it, he was perfectly right to refuse to meet the deputation. It would have been painful for himself and all of us. He showed delicacy, too, in choosing to receive us on his own ground, as it were. Yes, that was delicate, and at the same time dignified. I understand his motives perfectly. Mr. Denborough is a gentleman."

"And a millionaire," put in someone. The remark passed as a joke with a subtle *sous-entendu* for business appreciation, and they laughed. Only Jeremy Hathers fidgeted nervously.

"A queer thing that about Mrs. Denborough," he said. "One would have thought she'd have rushed to see him. I don't understand it."

"Mrs. Denborough is getting old," the mayor retorted. "Her mind's a bit unhinged, and no wonder. I can understand perfectly——"

"You forget," Milroy broke in sharply.

The mayor shrugged his shoulders.

"My dear young fellow, because you happen to be the old lady's adopted son we cannot refuse to look the facts in the face. Nor is there anything derogatory in suggesting such an explanation for her extraordinary attitude. You suggested it yourself."

Denis Milroy remained silent.

"It's altogether a queer business," Hathers went on. "Who'd have thought thirty years ago that we should have been receiving Andrew Denborough with all this pomp and circumstance? There wasn't much good said of him in those days, was there?"

Baillie laughed.

"Yes, we made it hot for the poor devil——"

The door had opened and the last word died on the mayor's lips. The man who had entered was recognized by them all instantly. It was not merely that they expected him—the Andrew Denborough of their youth had risen up before them with a vividness that drove the intervening years into shadow and gave to their dulled memories an undesired poignancy. There was the same truculent poise o the massive head, the same passionate, deep-set eyes, the same tense-looking mouth.

"Well, gentlemen?" Denborough then looked from one to the other. During that brief, unsmiling inspection no one moved. Then suddenly he laughed gaily and held out his hand. "Hullo, Johnnie!"

The mayor started as though he had been awakened from a deep sleep. He blinked stupidly, and the next moment his own hand was outstretched and clasped

in a grip that was part of the reviving past.

"Hullo, Andrew!" Yet the familiarity did not come easily. It was only when the last man had been greeted that the mayor recovered his hold over the situation. Denborough had reached the spot where the young doctor had withdrawn to, and in the abrupt cessation of his jovial recognitions Baillie blundered forward.

"Dr. Milroy, the discoverer of the Beachtown mineral water—Mr. Denborough."

The inevitable square-built hand was held out. Milroy bowed over it. He did not know why—the feeling defied analysis—at the bottom of his consciousness there stirred a sullen, unreasoning resentment.

"The younger generation?" Denborough said. "Beachtown owes you a great deal, Doctor Milroy."

"I did not make the springs," Denis answered boorishly.

Denborough smiled. It was as though a clumsy young cub had tumbled over itself to his good-natured amusement.

"The discoverer is as great as the creator. Well, gentlemen, I confess to a wolfish appetite. Shall we adjourn to dinner?"

¶

THEY answered him in a confused chorus. Each man in his own way was fighting his own particular form of discomfort. They had expected things to be different—how different they were not sure—either less formal or more so. They were baffled by Denborough's unchanged attitude towards them and the subtle change in the man himself. They followed sheepishly. The room was banked with flowers. Down the centre of the perfectly spread table the words "For auld lang syne" were written in pale mauve orchids. Beachtown's famous old-fashioned hotel had not seen such prodigality in all the days of its existence.

Denborough motioned each man to his place.

"Johnnie, you here, old fellow, at my right. I claim the privilege next Beachtown's go-ahead mayor. You've found your seat as by instinct, Hathers. You see, I remembered your liking for the fireside. You over there, Sanders. Doctor Milroy, will you take the other end? Age and youth at opposite poles, eh?"

They were served by two soberly garbed footmen, who fulfilled their duties silently and cunningly. Under their administration the wine flowed freely, and there was a gradual thaw in the glacial restraint of the first few minutes. Hathers became nervously loquacious. He plied Denborough with questions regarding the latter's American experiences, scarcely waiting for the deliberately given answers, as though the slightest break in the conversation terrified him. The mayor spread out his brave expanse of shirt front, and with one hand on his thigh, the other clenched on the table, nodded a ponderous approval. From time to time he glanced down the length of the table like a general marshalling his army, and once, his glance encountering Milroy's, he smiled a solemn patronage. The young doctor's face remained expressionless. The curious sense of dull resentment had sharpened. All his life his nameless youth, with its grinding poverty, his passionate, heaven-aspiring ambitions, seemed to have been dragged down to the level of this vulgar festivity. These red-faced, self-satisfied shopkeepers, fawning on the man they had cruelly wronged, filled him with a sick disgust. They had risen on the foundation of his work, and now they had discarded him and the ideal which had been his inspiration. With a kind of despair he looked across at the man to whom he had come to offer what comfort, what consolation lay in his power. Andrew Denborough met the questioning gaze coldly. And then, as though yielding to a long-repressed impulse, he leant forward.

"How is my mother, Doctor Milroy?" he asked.

The question fell like a silencing blow on the little company. Milroy did not flinch.

"She is very well, Mr. Denborough."

"You know, I suppose, that she has refused to see me?"

"Yes."

"As her medical adviser, and, as I understand, adopted son, can you offer me any explanation for her attitude towards me?"

The sneer in the loud voice was unmistakable. An antagonism, as yet vague and indefinable, began to take swift shape between them.

"I can give you no explanation," said Milroy coldly.

"Ah!" Denborough sat back. It was as though he had drawn a damaging confession from an opposing witness. On his right the mayor fidgeted and then rose abruptly to his feet.

"Mr. Denborough," he began thickly, "I know you are not the man to listen to long speeches, and I am certainly not the man to make them. Action is the only language men of our calibre understand, but it seems to me that the moment has come when I, the Mayor of Beachtown and deputed spokesman for my fellow citizens, should express to you our joy in welcoming you back in our midst." He cleared his throat and then went on with a kind of desperate bonhomie. "Thirty years have passed since you left us, Mr. Denborough, to seek your fortune in the New World. In that time much has happened. We have grown older and wiser. We have seen our errors—we are prepared to acknowledge them manfully. We have lifted our native town from its apathy and obscurity into the high road which leads to greatness, and now, at this solemn season of the year, it seems to us a fitting climax that you, Beachtown's greatest citizen, should return to receive from us our tokens of—of respect and of regret."

He stumbled, conscious that the bad turning had been reached. Andrew Denborough leant forward and pulled his old schoolfellow's sleeve.

"Do you remember the day I blacked your eye, Johnnie?" he said.

The mayor's jaw dropped. He looked about him blankly, then, as he saw Denborough's face, he laughed uncertainly, and the next instant the laugh shook the table. Denborough was the first to recover himself. He rose with a delightful gesture of regret.

"Gentlemen, I have to apologize. My abominable sense of humour has robbed us all of our honoured friend's generous and fluent speech, and it is 'up to me,' as our American friends say, to make good. Indeed, seeing all your familiar faces, I could not shut out the crowding memories of my youth, and your laugh assures me that you all forgive me. The best thing I can do to prove my repentance is to be as brief as possible. But there are one or two points which I must touch on. My pleasure at being with you again is not easily expressed, but what am I to say of my pride in the advance that my native town has made under your guidance? Gentlemen, I determined, when I had heard of all you had done, to be worthy of you all. I determined to follow your example. I have returned a wealthy man, gentlemen, and it is my wish and intention to put my wealth, as you have put your energies, at the service of suffering humanity."

The applause was long and persistent. Denborough's eyes passed over the two lines of flushed, eager faces to the man at the end of the table. Milroy sat motionless, his pale features set and tense-looking.

"At first my course was uncertain. I wavered among many projects, but now I am glad to be able to tell you that I see my way clear. As you know, Beachtown is itself scarcely salubrious. It is placed in a valley, and its guests coming to receive benefit by the springs are likely to suffer much from a close and stifling atmosphere. It occurred to me, therefore, that a watering-place built on the mountain top, with every modern contrivance for the comfort and entertainment of its guests, would be more likely to meet the general demand." He paused again. The almost persistent ripple of applause had died away into a stupid silence. Only Milroy drew himself up as though preparing to meet a blow. "Gentlemen," Denborough went on deliberately, "it is with the greatest pleasure that I am able to inform you that my idea is to take a very practical form. I have obtained concessions of land which will enable me to direct part of the spring to a better level. One of England's best architects is drawing up plans for a model sanatorium, and also for the hotels, concert halls, and bath establishments which will be necessary. I have the promise of four of the first London specialists to overlook the medical department. Finally, and I know this part will appeal to your generous instincts, no company will be formed, and all profits that are made will be set aside for the improvement and maintenance of the new town. In a year's time I hope to have the happiness of opening the place to the general public, and that you, as my boyhood's friends, will honour me by being the first to accept its hospitality."

He sat down. The silence seemed never-ending. Only Denis Milroy had moved. He sat forward a little. In that moment his resentment and bitterness

had died down. These ashy-faced, sickly looking men on either side were no longer ridiculous or contemptible. They were part of himself. In a flash of intuition he saw their lives, mean, plodding, greybound in monotony, rising for one glowing, burning instant into the broad light of prosperity, to be thrust back anew into utter ruin. His own ruin was forgotten, swamped in a wave of an all-embracing passion of pity.

"Mr. Denborough," he said, "do you realize what your project means to us?"

"Yes, I fancy so."

"We won't mince words with each other. You came here to ruin Beachtown. You asked us here to tell us so."

"You are a very intelligent young man."

"That is your revenge?"

Denborough made no answer. He leant forward, and choosing a walnut from a silver dish cracked it deliberately.

"Mr. Denborough, you are not only ruining those who once injured you. You are ruining hundreds who were not born at the time, who scarcely knew your name."

"You, for instance?"

The sneering, taunting eyes met Milroy's without a flinch.

"Yes, I. I am responsible for Beachtown. I led these men to believe in the town's future, to risk their all. I am responsible. What have I done to you that you should crush me?"

"What are you to me, Doctor Milroy, that I should hesitate?"

"Mr. Denborough, are you so immaculate that you dare claim such a penalty?"

Andrew Denborough's clenched fist crashed down upon the table.

"Yes," he said. "I have toiled and moiled with clean hands so that I could come back and do this. They"—he pointed a savage finger at each man in turn—"they harried me out with a lie, and now I shall harry them out—justly. That is all."

"Then there is no more to be said. We shall fight you as best we can."

"You will be beaten."

"I know; but we shall fight. Come, gentlemen."

They rose and followed him like sheep. The mayor stumbled as he crossed the room, and the round, ruddy face had become sallow and shrunken. No one looked at the man seated at the head of the deserted table.

As the door closed he burst out laughing.

III

ANDREW DENBOROUGH tossed a letter across to the secretary.

"You can answer that yourself," he said. "Tell them I'm busy, but that, following your instructions, you have the honour to inform the deputation that I have nothing to add to my first announcement. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"That will do. No, wait." He was silent for a moment, his heavy chin resting on his chest, his eyes fixed moodily on the large pile of papers before him. "You've been about the town, Burrows," he said; "you must have heard scraps of gossip. What's the news?"

"Things seem to be pretty bad, sir. There's a kind of panic—everybody wanting to sell out and no one buying. It looks as though most of them are badly hit."

"And they are cursing me, eh?"

The young man smiled uncertainly.

"It's pretty fair, sir."

"That's what I wanted. You can go, Burrows."

"Thank you, sir."

The door closed. Denborough remained motionless at his table by the window. Outside it had begun to drizzle—a dismal descent, half rain, half snow, which seemed to draw down with it a curtain of premature twilight. The lights of the town, blurred and haloed by the mist, had already begun to spring out, marking the line of the streets, but the hills opposite were hidden. Denborough pushed aside the curtain and peered out. From the direction of his gaze he seemed to be trying to pick out some special landmark, but all that stood out distinctly was the great square building opposite — Beachtown's newly opened sanatorium. Denborough relapsed with a smothered sigh and switched on his electric reading lamp. There was no other light in the room, and the powerful rays fought with a melancholy, fast-increasing darkness.

The door opened softly.

"A lady to see you, sir."

Denborough nodded abstractedly. He

did not appear to have heard, for, even after the door had closed again, he did not move. Then, quite suddenly, yet as though touched with an invisible warning, he turned. The next minute he was on his feet.

"Mother!"

He had taken an involuntary step towards her. She waved him back with a gesture as final as any of his own.

"Keep your place, Andrew. Don't come near me. I have not come here to sentimentalize or to play at reconciliation. Sit down."

"By all means." He obeyed her. His face was hard set and without a trace of emotion, but his hands were tight clenched on the arm of his chair. "I am afraid I don't understand you, mother," he went on. "I have not returned as a prodigal, and I did not expect a fatted calf to be killed in my honour. But I expected justice—from you of all people, at least."

"Did you?" she asked.

"I confess, yes. Probably I have some foolish, inherited idea of a mother's loyalty to her children—an antiquated idea, no doubt. At any rate, I was learning to accept facts—to understand that to be accused is paramount in your eyes to guilt. Only I cannot understand why you have come now."

"Can't you?"

"No. Won't you sit down, at least, mother?"

"I prefer to stand."

He threw back his head with a movement of restless anger.

"I can only suppose you have come to plead. That protégé of yours—that Milroy—has been whining to you for himself and the rest."

"No one has whined, Andrew Denborough. I have not come here to plead with you. You came to Beachtown to administer justice, as you thought. I, also, have come to administer justice."

"You? On whom?"

"On you."

He sat stiff and straight, wholly unmoved.

"I am prepared to accept justice. I was, and am, innocent. The world—everyone but you—knows that much."

"Everyone but me!" The shadow of a smile twisted her thin lips. "Your hands are quite clean, Andrew Denborough?"

He nodded with a fierce, controlled triumph.

"Yes."

"That is your judgment and the world's judgment. You have kept your man-made code of laws, and you count yourself innocent and honourable. But there are other codes, my son—there is mine."

"Yours?"

He bent forward, his deep-set eyes striving to pierce the shadows that veiled her face. "Yours?" he repeated curiously, half mockingly.

She nodded.

"If you had committed murder I should have followed you to the foot of the gallows; if you had forged that cheque, if you had cheated and lied, if you had broken every moral law and had paid the penalty, I should have stood by you, I should have lived and waited for you. I should have received you back now, in the face of every man. But you have broken *my* code, my son, and your sin is unatoned." She took a step forward and came into the circle of light. "I have come to claim atonement," she said.

"Mother!" He rose involuntarily, as though to meet her and what was to come. "Mother, I don't understand you."

"Jenny Ward is dead."

"Jenny?"

"She came to me a year after you left. She died in my arms. I gave her a promise when she was dying, and I have kept my promise. I mean to keep it now."

"Well?"

She made a single gesture, her first.

"Don't you understand now?" she said. "It's your son you are ruining with the rest, Andrew Denborough."

His hand went out searchingly, blindly. She did not take it. Her eyes never released his. "I have fought your battle," she went on. "I gave your son a name. I hid your dishonour from him. I shielded him from the curses you laid on him. I paid your debt to him. Now you have to pay your debt to me. I am your mother and your judge, Andrew."

"My judge?" He turned from her, looking at the littered table, at his own hands as though, in some inexplicable way, they troubled him. And, lastly, his eyes went back to hers with a dogged challenge.

"I did not know—I could not have known," he said.

"You never sought to know," she returned relentlessly. "You know now."

"Even if I accepted your judgment, it is too late."

"It is not too late."

"You are trying to confuse the issues." He was fighting her desperately. "You are trying to confuse injustice with a youthful madness—crime with mere error. There is no analogy."

"So men say. But sin is sin, dishonour is dishonour. That is my code." She turned and went back to the door and opened it. "Denis," she called, "my son wishes to speak with you both."

"Mother, what are you asking of me?"

"What you claimed—justice."

The man's eyes followed her frail, still upright figure as it came slowly back to him. Once more he held out his hand, at first protestingly, then very pleadingly. She brushed it ruthlessly aside. Then, of a sudden, he braced himself. Denis Milroy stood on the threshold. He, too, held himself defiantly, his young head thrown back in challenging self-assurance. His wife clung to his arm, but her face was as proud, as fearless.

"Mr. Denborough," he began, "your mother has asked me to speak with you and to bring my wife. I have consented, against my will and my reason. I do not profess to see any purpose in our coming, for I have not come to beg of you. I hope you know that."

Denborough raised his hand.

"I know and understand," he said. "But my mother—our mother was right. I wish to speak to you. I ask you as a favour to listen to me and to carry my message to the rest. Doctor Milroy, I speak to you as one man to another; and all men err. I erred. It seems that no man's hands are clean enough to enforce the justice I claimed. I see that now. Will you tell the others that I retract all I said that night, that I am sorry?" He straightened his shoulders. "The work that I have begun will go on, Doctor Milroy; but it shall be my gift to Beachtown, my act of—of restitution, shall we say? Is it accepted?"

There was a moment of painful silence. Alice Milroy looked at the man standing by the light and then up at her husband's hard-set face.

"Denis," she said impulsively. "Don't you understand—don't you know what it is costing? Can't you be generous, too?"

Then his hand went out.

"My wife is right, Mr. Denborough. You *are* generous. Your offer is accepted. I ask your forgiveness for my hesitation, for every bitter thought I may have had against you."

"And I yours, for every act." He turned away with his face to the shadow. "Doctor Milroy, I hope one day we shall all meet again—that you will grant me a little of your friendship—both of you. But to-day I am tired. You will understand that it is not easy for a man of my years and temperament to yield."

"I understand—and honour you. I will take your message to your old friends, Mr. Denborough."

He heard them cross the room. He heard the door close and swung round with a smothered exclamation. The black-clad figure in the shadows had not moved.

"Mother, isn't it enough?"

She came to him and put her arms about his bowed shoulders and kissed him.

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Moonlight

How the mystery of love was revealed to the Abbé Marignan

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Guy de Maupassant is still the acknowledged master of the short story. No other writer has excelled him in variety of subject-matter or in the difficult art of expressing a wealth of meaning within the shortest possible compass. In this charming episode, built upon the slenderest of fancies, the art of Maupassant is exhibited at its best.

THE Abbé Marignan's demeanour was not unworthy of one who bore the name of a battle. He was tall, lean and fanatical, with a fervour that never abated, a conscience that never relaxed, beliefs that never swerved a hair's breadth. It was his profound conviction that he understood the God whom he worshipped, and was able to fathom His designs, His wishes, His purposes.

As he vigorously paced the garden paths of his little country parsonage, a question would sometimes present itself to his mind:

"What were God's motives for such and such an act?"

He would put himself in God's place, reason the matter out pertinaciously, and, as a rule, successfully. Not for him were those transports of devout surrender, in which the faithful murmur:

"Lord, Thy ways are hid from me."

On the contrary, he argued that as God's servant he had a right to know his Master's reasons, and if he did not actually know them, he would do his best to guess them. In his eyes the whole scheme of creation seemed to have been devised with a logical symmetry, which was absolute and admirable. Question and answer were ever in perfect equipoise. The purpose of dawn was to provide a glad awakening; of broad daylight to ripen the crops; of evening to dispose one to slumber; and of darkness to make one sleep sound. The course of the seasons coincided perfectly with the requirements of agriculture. Never can a suspicion have crossed his priestly mind that purpose cannot be attributed to nature; that, on the contrary, it is life that has had to adapt itself to the despotism of epochs, temperature and the laws of matter.

For woman he had an instinctive hatred and contempt.

"Woman," he would say, in the words of Christ, "what have I to do with thee?"

And he would further reflect:

"Surely God Himself can hardly have been pleased with this work of His."

Woman was indeed to him, as the poet has described her, "a child without a child's innocence."

She was the temptress, who had lured astray the first man and had never ceased from her work of damnation. Disturbing and unfathomable, she was, though feeble in herself, pregnant with dangers to others. More even than her accursed flesh, he detested her unquenchable love of love. He had often felt her affection hovering around him, and although he knew himself proof against her, it angered him to see her perpetually quivering with this passionate hunger for love. To his mind, God had created woman merely as a trial and temptation, to be approached with defensive precautions, and to be shunned as one would shun a snare. In fact, a decoy was precisely what she was, luring a man with kisses and caresses.

The only women whom he regarded with tolerance were sisters of religion, who had been rendered innocuous by their vows, but he was hard with them none the less, because he was conscious that in the depths of their enslaved and humbled hearts still lurked inextinguishable that never-dying tenderness, reaching out even to him, a priest. He read it in their eyes, which brimmed with devotion as those of a monk never did; he saw their sex intrude into their ecstasies, into their transports of love towards Christ, and he was indignant because he knew that this love was womanly and of the flesh. In their very docility,

in their downcast eyes, in the gentleness of their voices when they spoke to him, in their tears of resignation when he reproved them harshly, in all this he discerned that same accursed sentiment. When he passed out of the convent doors, he would shake his cassock; and his strides would lengthen, as if he were fleeing from some danger.

He had a niece, who lived with her mother in a small house in the neighbourhood, and he had set his heart on making her a Sister of Charity. She was pretty, feather-brained, and inclined to make fun of things. When the Abbé lectured her, she laughed; and when he was annoyed, she threw her arms round him and hugged him. He would make instinctive efforts to free himself from her embrace, and yet it gave him a tender joy and aroused in the depths of his nature that sense of fatherhood which lies dormant in all men. As he walked by her side along the field-paths he would frequently speak to her about God as he conceived Him. But she hardly listened; she would gaze at the sky, the grass, the flowers, with the joy of life shining in her eyes. Sometimes she would dart away in pursuit of a butterfly, and when she had caught it she would exclaim:

"Look, uncle, how pretty it is. I could kiss it!"

And the priest was vexed, disturbed and shocked by this craving of hers to kiss insects or lilac buds, discerning even here the ineradicable fondness that ever germinates in a woman's heart.

Then came a day when the sexton's wife, who kept house for the Abbé, gave him cautiously to understand that his niece had a lover. This information was a terrible shock to him, and he stood there choking, with his face all covered with soap, for he had been interrupted while shaving. When his powers of thought and speech returned to him, he exclaimed:

"You must be mistaken, Mélanie."

But his housekeeper laid her hand on her heart and said:

"May the good Lord judge me, if I'm not speaking the truth! As soon as your sister is in bed, off goes your niece every evening. They meet along the river bank. You have only to go there between ten o'clock and midnight."

He stopped scraping his chin, and began to walk violently up and down, as was his custom when he had something serious to consider. When he resumed his interrupted shave, he gashed himself thrice from nose to ear. Bursting with rage and indignation, he did not say one word all day. He felt the natural fury of a priest who has been defied by love the invincible; and, more than this, the chagrin of the moral instructor, the guardian, the spiritual guide, who had been deceived, tricked, made game of, by a child; the apoplectic vanity of parents, whose daughter informs them that she has, without them, and in spite of them, made her own choice of a husband.

After dinner he tried to read a book, but could make nothing of it. Every hour saw his fury increase. On the stroke of ten he seized his walking-stick, a formidable oaken staff, which he used when he went out at night to visit the sick. Smiling grimly, he grasped this stout cudgel in his strong peasant's hands, and twirled it in menacing circles. Then suddenly he raised it high in the air, and, gnashing his teeth, brought it down on a chair with such violence that the back of the chair broke off and fell to the floor.

Then he opened the front door to go out. But on the threshold he stopped, astounded by the lustrous moon which shone with a splendour such as is seldom witnessed. And inasmuch as he was endowed with the spirit of lofty imagination, such a spirit as must have possessed those poet-dreamers, the Fathers of the Church, he felt moved to the soul by the infinite, serene beauty of that radiant night. In this little garden, all flooded with soft moonlight, the budding, slender branches of his fruit trees cast their clear-cut shadows across the path, and the giant honeysuckle which clung to the wall of the house sent forth its balmy breath, pervading the mild, clear evening with a sweetness that seemed itself almost a soul.

He began to breathe deeply, drinking in the air as drunkards drink wine, and he set forth at a slow pace. He was ravished, awestruck. The thought of his niece had almost vanished from his mind. As soon as he was clear of the houses, he paused to gaze upon the great sweep of country, flooded by that caressing radiance, bathed in the tender, languishing charm of that serenely beautiful night. The frogs never ceased uttering their short metallic note. With the seduction of the moonlight, distant nightingales mingled strains of that linked

sweetness which begets reverie rather than thought, that light, vibrant music, fit accompaniment for kisses.

Somehow, as he started on his walk again, the Abbé found his resolution failing. He was conscious of a sudden debility and lack of energy; he wanted to sit down where he was and stay there and look about him and adore God in His works.

Down in the river valley a long line of poplars wound its way by the course of the meandering stream. Above its steep banks hovered a delicate, white vapour, which was transfused with silvery radiance by the moonbeams. It lay along the tortuous windings of the stream like a floating veil of filmy tissue. Again the priest came to a halt, moved to the depth of his soul by an increasing and irresistible emotion. He was attacked by a doubt, a vague disquietude; confronted by one of those questions which he sometimes put to himself. What was God's purpose in all this? Night is destined for sleep, unconsciousness, repose, oblivion. Why then had God made it more enchanting than day, fairer than dawn or sunset? How was it that that heavenly orb, moving so slowly, so seductively, more full of poetry than the sun itself, and destined, so discreet it seemed, to shed its radiance on things too delicate, too mysterious for common daylight, had such power to make the darkness luminous? How came it that the most brilliant singer of all the singing birds refused to seek repose like its mates, preferring to utter its music in a haunted shade? Why was this half-transparent veil cast across the earth? Whence these stirrings of the heart, this emotion of the soul, these languors of the body? All humanity was asleep. Why, then, this display of loveliness for men who were steeped in unconsciousness, for whom were intended the sublime spectacle, this wealth of poetry, scattered so lavishly by heaven upon the earth?

The Abbé could find no answer to his problem. But suddenly he caught sight of two shadowy figures, a youth and a maid, walking side by side on the edge of the fields. Above them, steeped in misty radiance, arched the vault of the great trees. The youth was the taller of the two. He had his arm round his companion's shoulders, and every now and then he kissed her on the forehead. These two at once gave significance to the placid landscape that fitted them like a heavenly frame. They seemed, the two of them, like one being, the very being for whom this calm and silent night was intended, and as they came nearer to the priest they seemed in very truth the answer, the living answer, which his Master was giving to his questionings.

The Abbé stood there with beating heart, his mind in a whirl. Surely what he gazed upon was some scene from Holy Writ, the love of Ruth and Boaz, the fulfilment of God's will in one of those great dramatic effects that one reads of in the sacred books. In his head began to ring the verses of the Song of Songs; the ardent outpourings, the call of heart to heart, all the fervent poetry of that lyric of fire and love.

"It may be," he reflected, "that God has created nights like this in order to cast His divine veil over human loves."

Linked together, the youth and the maid came nearer, and the Abbé drew back. He recognized his niece, but now he was wondering whether he was not in danger of disobeying God. If God enveloped human love in this visible splendour, how could it be argued that He forbade it?

Completely bewildered, almost ashamed, as though he had penetrated a shrine which he had no right to enter, the Abbé fairly took to flight.

MAY EDGINTON, E. F. BENSON, ROBERT W. CHAMBERS, BERTRAM ATKEY, OLIVE WADSLEY are some of the famous writers who contribute to

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The Last Passenger

"Do men die so easily?"

By JACOB POWER

MEADE was having his coffee in the smoking-room. Major Martin came in and joined him.

A watchful steward hurried over. "Coffee, sir?"

"Please."

"Cigarettes, major?"

"I will—thanks."

Lavis came in. Both men passed the greetings of the evening with him, and then Meade, at least, forgot that he existed. Only interesting people were of value to Meade, and he had early in the passage appraised Lavis—one of those negligible persons whose habit was to hover near some group of notables and look at them or listen to them, and, if encouraged, join in the conversation; or, if invited, take a hand in a game of cards.

"Seen Cadogan since dinner, major?"

"He's patrolling the deck now."

"With the beautiful lady?"

"No—alone."

"Thank God! And where is she?"

"Oh, she's nicely enthroned, thank you, in an angle of the lounge-room with that twenty-millionaire coal baron, Drissler."

"It's bath tubs, and he's only got three millions."

"The poor beggar! Well, Meade, if ever she gets within shelling distance of his little three millions, they'll melt like sugar in tea."

"No doubt of that. And yet—and yet up to late this afternoon, at least, she appeared to be delighting in the presence of Cadogan."

"She surely did. But"—Major Martin eyed Meade quizzically—"what are you worrying about?"

"I'm afraid she hasn't really dropped him. I know too much about her. The three millions would be nice to draw upon, but her one unquenchable passion is man, and in build, looks, age, and temperament Cadogan is a rich prize."

"He's only a boy."

"M-m—twenty-six!"

"What's twenty-six? He's still a dreaming boy. I'd like to say what I really thought of her."

Martin crushed the smoking end of his cigarette against the ash-tray. "I'll have to run along now."

"Back soon? Bring Vogel."

"If I can detach him from his beloved maps. Ten million in railroads he's got now. And coloured maps of 'em he's got. He gloats over 'em—gloats, every night before he turns in."

"Hurry him up, anyway. And drive Cadogan in."

Lavis was sitting on the skylight. He always seemed to be sitting on the skylight—a long, lean, huddled-up figure in the corner, looking out with half-closed eyes on the life of the smoking-room.

Cadogan came in. Meade revolved the chair next to him at the table, so that he had only to fall into it. Cadogan nodded his thanks. Catching sight of Lavis, he nodded and smiled, then the talk drifted to the safety of ocean travellers. It followed on an incident of the afternoon. The great liner, ploughing through the Atlantic, had suddenly been pulled up at the call of a voice. The look-out had shouted, the officer on the bridge touched the telegraph, down below Andie had pulled the lever, and the massive machinery had stopped—stopped while two thousand pairs of eyes, at a modest computation, had gazed at that tiny object. It was a ship's boat. As it drew nearer a gasp went up from the wonder-struck watchers. The boat that came floating upon the desolate waters was not empty—a hand protruded over its side.

In a little while it bobbed at the side of the vessel, then was upon the deck, and from it a silent form had been lifted and hastily carried below. Even now none knew the fate of the lonely survivor, but everyone had read tragedy and much suffering into the incident. So it was natural, now dinner

was over, that the men in the lounge should gossip of safety on the sea. And, too, it was easy from this material for Meade to set Cadogan, that gay adventurer, talking out of his own experiences. He might have gone on indefinitely, only, suddenly coming to himself and looking round, he discovered that half the room had gathered in a semi-circle behind his chair. He flushed, and cut his story off short. The crowd dispersed.

"How did you ever find time in your young life for the half of it? And how you do suggest things—possibilities that try a man's spirit even to contemplate."

Cadogan did not respond; but from Lavis, the man on the skylight, came: "And you are now suggesting the really great adventuring."

Meade turned in surprise. "What is that?"

"Isn't it in the spirit we have the really great adventures?"

"You mean that the most thrilling adventures are those we only dream about, but which never happen?"

"I didn't mean exactly that, for they do happen. What I meant was that to try your body was nothing, but to try your soul—*there* would be something."

"To risk or to try it?" asked Meade.

"Oh, to try it only. To risk it, would not that be sinful?"

Thinking of Meade, who was a journalist, Cadogan said, hesitatingly and shyly: "I've often thought I'd like to be a writer." He meant that for Lavis, but it was Meade who took it to himself to ask him why.

"If I were a writer I'd have hope now of taking part in one of the greatest adventures that could befall a man."

"Where?"

"Right aboard this ship. How? Here we are tearing through the iceberg country trying to make a record. If ever we piled up head on to one of those icebergs, where would we be?"

"But it is a clear night. And the look-outs."

"Never mind the clear night or the look-outs—if they are not on the job."

"But this ship can't sink."

"No? But suppose we can sink, and that she is sinking. There are four thousand people aboard—and down she goes. Wouldn't that be an experience?"

Cadogan wondered what the man on the skylight was thinking about. He put his next question directly to him. "There would be some great deaths, don't you think, sir?"

"Some great, some horrible."

"Oh, but men would die like gods at such a time."

"No doubt—and like dogs also."

Meade did not relish losing control of the conversation to an undistinguished outsider. "Look here, Cadogan," he interjected, "could a man live through that—go down and survive?"

"He would come up probably—yes; but he would not live long—too cold. The numbness soon creeps up to your heart, and then—good night!"

"But how can a man do it and live?"

"Why do you insist that he should live?" It was Lavis who had spoken.

Meade's eyebrows rose above the tops of his horn glasses. "Eh!"

Cadogan, too, stared with curiosity.

"To live after it would be only half to complete the adventure."

Meade now smiled with obvious tolerance. "But a man dead and buried in the depths of the sea!"

"That would only be his body, and we were speaking of an adventure of the spirit—of the soul. The man should experience every physical dread, every nervous fear, every emotional horror of those last few minutes, share the bitterness of the disillusionment inevitable when three or four thousand ordinary, everyday human beings are dying in bitterness, because, as they would judge it, dying so needlessly. To get the full measure of it, and to share also in the sweetness and resignation of great souls in the hour of death, his mortal body would, of course, have to meet death even as the others."

Meade readjusted his horn spectacles. He would have to revise his notes of the man, that was plain. Forty, or forty-five possibly, he was. Tall and large-framed, but spare, thin-cheeked, and hollow-templed, with white streaks among the close-clipped, very black, and very thin hair which showed from under his cap. A worn-looking man, a student.

"Mr. Cadogan, coming back to us from perilous experiences, makes us share with him in every tremor, every dread, every thought he himself felt in his adventure. And how can he do that? Isn't it because in the perilous moment his soul is tranquil? If death comes, well and good—it cannot be helped; if not, then a glorious adventure.

He meets danger with every faculty keyed up to the highest."

He turned his head so as to look squarely at Cadogan. Through the half-closed wistful eyes Cadogan caught a gleam.

"But," said Meade, "how is the world to benefit by your theory?"

"Well, call it theory. God will not allow a great spirit to die. After the mortal death of a man undergoing a tremendous experience there will be born again a great soul. And, if the being in whom that soul is enshrined is but true to the best in himself, he will compel the world to listen to his message; and the world, having listened, will be for all time the better."

"I suppose"—Meade was not wholly free of self-consciousness—"a man should have had a training as a writer to fit him best for such an experience?"

"Writer, sculptor, painter, musician, law-giver—anything so that he possess the germ, the potential power to make others see, hear, or feel things as he does."

"But who aboard this ship possesses such a gift?"

Lavis turned to Cadogan. "Here is the man."

"Who?" Cadogan bounded in his seat; and then, smiling at himself: "That's a good one—I took it seriously."

"Take it seriously, please."

Cadogan instantly sobered. "But I'm not aching to die. And I was never intended for a martyr."

"Are you sure you know what was intended for you? You have done great deeds in one way. You could do great deeds in another way. A great deed is never more than a great thought in action. You need but the great thought to give the great deed birth."

"Why wouldn't you yourself be the man for such a thing?" Meade was eyeing the man from under contracted eyebrows.

"Thanks!" His smile was almost perceptible.

"I did not mean——"

"No harm. It would need the creative genius. I am no longer creative."

"But you have an intellect?"

"Meaning that I have a well-developed muscle in the brain? The man who lifts heavy weights in the circus has also a well-developed muscle in his arm, or back, or legs, but what does he teach us that is for the betterment of the race? But Mr. Cadogan here has the flaming soul. And the last passenger on this ship should be such as he, a strong man with the innocence of the child. You are creative in thought; powerful, direct, tireless in action, Mr. Cadogan. Every new experience still comes to you with the dew of the morning on it. You would die hard, with your eyes open to the last. Nothing would escape you. And you would know what dying was, because for you to give up life would be a great renunciation."

Lavis rose to his feet. "I hope I haven't bored you too much? I think I will go out and get some fresh air." He bowed and smiled to Meade, smiled more warmly on Cadogan, wrapped his ulster over his evening clothes, and went out on deck.

Meade saw that Cadogan was gazing thoughtfully on the seat which Lavis had vacated. "What do you make of him, Cadogan?"

Cadogan's face, when he swung his chair round, was flushed, his dark blue eyes more glowing than usual. "I don't know, except that he had me thinking. He made me feel that he was reading my mind, and before he left I was saying to myself: 'When I grow older I'll be something like him, only, of course, with less brains than he's got.'"

"You'll have brains enough, don't fear. He made me think of the head of a religious order who went wrong some years ago. But that was before I knew much of the inside of continental affairs. A woman, as I recall it. However, he's gone—he made my head ache trying to follow him, and—but there are the Major and Vogel passing the port-hole. I'll call them in and we'll have our little rubber."

II

THEY sat in to their little rubber, and while they played a passenger of importance was auctioning off the pool on the ship's run for the next day.

He stood on a table to see and be seen, a short, fat, bearded man who sometimes had to pause for breath. "What d'y' say, gentlemen? We all know what we did up to noon to-day. We are doing even better, impossible though it may seem, this afternoon. Now, what am I offered for the high field? Come now, gentlemen. By Tuesday morning, at ten o'clock, are we to be abreast of Sandy Hook, or not? It will be a record run if we make it, but whether we

are a few minutes late or early, it portends a grand day's run for to-morrow. Come, gentlemen, bid up!"

"What of the rumours of icebergs?" asked a voice.

"Pray do not joke, gentlemen. I beg of you, do not joke. Has any person here observed any notice of icebergs posted on the ship's board? I fancy not. To-day I myself put the question to the man whose word is law on this ship. Do I have to name him, gentlemen? No need, is there? No, 'Are we going to slow down?' was my question. 'On the contrary, with such a calm sea we ought to go faster,' was the reply."

There was a laugh. "Seventy pounds!" was called.

"That's the spirit, gentlemen. Seventy pounds for the high field. The gentleman who shall be fortunate enough to win this pool will have something to brag about in future days. Come now, how much for the high field? Seventy-five? Good! Gentlemen, I am offered——"

"What's the high field worth, Cadogan?" asked Vogel.

"All you want to bid, if nothing goes wrong. But what's the use, anyway? I wouldn't bother about it myself, and these gambles are not to my liking. I wouldn't give a penny for it."

"I won't bid, then."

The voice of the man on the table was increasing in volume. "Eighty-five pounds I am offered for the high field. It is not enough, not enough by far, gentlemen——"

The ship heaved, not violently, gently rather, under them. There was an easy, slight roll to port, a dull, almost noiseless bumping, a slow, heavy resistance, as of a heavy object being forced over a stubbornly yielding surface.

To either side of him and in the mirrors Cadogan could see a dozen men peer inquiringly up over their cards or books or glasses. Meade stared around the room. "What the deuce is that?" he asked, and held a card high, with eyes directed to the nearest deck door.

There was a recoil of the ship, which slowly and gently, but surely and almost comically, to Cadogan's way of thinking, urged the stout waist of Meade against the edge of the table.

Cadogan waited his last turn to play, laid down his card, and scooped in the trick. "Forty on points, eight on honours, major," he said, and set it down. "If nobody minds, I'll step out on deck and see what stopped her."

"But she's not stopped," exclaimed Vogel.

"Yes, she is." Cadogan strolled out of the smoking-room. Three or four preceded him; half a dozen, who had nothing else to do, got up and strolled out after him.

In a few minutes those who had gone out were beginning to return. "Well, what do you know about that?" whooped the first one. "Hit a lump of ice!"

"Lucky for the ice we didn't hit it fair, with this forty-thousand tonner going along at twenty-five or twenty-six knots an hour like she is!"

Several laughed at that, and Major Martin, who was patiently shuffling the cards, called out: "Did you see Mr. Cadogan out there?"

"I saw him going towards the bow of the ship, major," was the answer.

"Investigating, I suppose? We'll play dummy—what do you all say?—till, say—till Caddy comes back. He's possessed of a demon for finding out things. Your deal, Mr. Vogel."

A steward stepped in from the deck. "Major Martin, sir?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Cadogan told me to say not to wait till he came back, sir, but to go on with the game, sir."

Vogel picked up his cards. "How long will we be delayed, steward?"

"Oh, not more than an hour or two, they say, sir."

"H-m-m—I'll have to buy Cadogan a good smoke when he comes back. He saved me ninety or a hundred pounds on that high field."

They resumed their game.

III

LAVIS was pacing the wide promenade deck, and sniffing the air as he paced. It was as if a breath of the north were on them, and yet—from the uncovered part of the deck astern he observed the steamer's smoke—the wind was not from the north.

Such passengers as were still making their rounds were doing so determinedly, in sweaters or top-coats. Without halting in their rapid walking they, too, at times

drew short, sharp breaths through high-held nostrils. It surely was growing colder. But why? A group held up an officer who was smoking his pipe in the lee of the canvas forward to ask him why. He at once set them right about it. Why, surely it should be cool—on the North Atlantic, in March, and well on in the evening!

A couple that Lavis knew for bride and groom turned out to lean over the rail. The groom was pointing down by the ship's side. "Hardly a ripple on it—see!" he exclaimed. "Only for the bubbling up from underneath, none at all. Like an endless belt sliding by so smoothly, isn't it? And above—see, sweetheart—a clear sky."

"Ah-h, a beautiful night!" she murmured. "On such a night——" Lavis, as he turned the corner of the house, saw him snatch her close and kiss her.

In lounge and smoking rooms all was cosy, cheerful, lively company. Lavis, in passing, had only to glance into air ports to be sure of that. It was card-playing and easy gossip in the one, and not infrequent drinks being brought to impatient men by alert, deferential, many-buttoned servants in the other. In the grill, those who must have a special little bite before turning in were having it; and this being a chilly sort of a night, there were those who were also having a warming drink, with the bite or without it.

It was growing late. The deck was now almost deserted. Lavis took a last look over the rail, a last gulp of the cooling air, and went into the lounge-room. Here he got from the steward paper and envelopes, sat down and wrote:

"Now see that you make no attempt to lure him back."

There was no address, no signature. He sealed the envelope and went below to where, at the end of a passageway, he found a stewardess on watch. "Miss Huttle hasn't come down yet, Hannah?"

"No, sir—Mr. Lavis."

"No? Well, there is a party in Mr. Drissler's suite."

"Mr. Drissler, sir?"

"The wealthy man in the royal suite."

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Miss Huttle is there. You take this note to her there, and let me know that it has been delivered, please."

Lavis went to his room, got out a long, loose linen duster, removed his old ulster, pulled the duster over his evening clothes, found an old cloth cap, and waited for the stewardess.

She came presently. "I gave it to Miss Huttle, Mr. Lavis. Into her own hand, sir."

"Thank you, Hannah."

¶

LAVIS left his room, and descended deep down into the ship, to where a man in dungarees, but with an officer's cap of authority, was perched on a horizontal grating, poring over the speed register. Over his shoulder Lavis watched the numerals shift—seven, eight, nine, thirty. One, two—eight, nine, forty. Click, click, click, click—he watched them until the officer turned and saw him.

"Ho, I was beginning to think you'd given me the go-by for to-night."

"Isn't it the most beautiful mechanism ever made by the hand of man?" exclaimed the officer. "A watch is nothing to it. And what you see here cost more than twenty thousand watches—twenty thousand of 'em, and every danged one in a gold case."

He drew out his own gun-metal stop-watch. "I'll time her now for a hundred revolutions."

He caught the time, set it down in a little notebook and slowly but surely reckoned it. "Grand, grand!" he said softly. "Will you come along? Good!"

They descended and ascended many narrow iron ladders and made their way through many narrow, grimy passage-ways. Oilers, firemen, coal passers, water tenders straightened up to give them a greeting as they passed. In one boiler room a fireman was scooping a dipper through the water pail at his feet as they entered.

"Are we holding our own this watch, Mr. Linnell?" He held the dipper respectfully in suspense for the answer.

"Holding it? Yes, and more."

"Hi, hi! an' that gang went off watch before us, Mr. Linnell—an' I fancy they rate themselves a competent watch—among themselves, sir—they threw it at us as how we'd do mighty well to hold our own." By this time his chief had passed on, but Lavis, lingering, saw him gulp his mouthful of water and squirt it *s-s-t!* contemptuously into a heap of hot ashes.

Linnell continued his rounds, sparing a nod here, a nod there, almost a full smile at times; and at times, too, a sharp snap of criticism. Lavis, in his rear, caught the

pursuing comment. He was the kind, was the chief, to let you know where you stood. And right he was. And no one would begrudge him what he could make of the passage, if so be could make more than his pay and a bit of reputation out of it, for surely his heart was in his work. Never one to loaf, by all reports, but this time !—not a single watch without his full rounds below.

Lavis followed the engineer up a narrow iron ladder, and thence up a wide iron ladder to where, from a heavily grated brass-railed platform, Linnell surveyed his engines.

He laid a hand on Lavis's shoulder, and extended an eloquent arm. " Worth looking at, aren't they ? The finest engines ever went into a ship, those engines you are looking at now, Mr. Lavis. It is something to have charge of the likes of them. Wait till I see some of my old mates." His was a low, chuckling laugh. " I'll be having a word to say, they better believe, of ship's engines ! Talking of their ten and twenty thousand tonners—ferry-boats, river ferry-boats, that's what I'll tell 'em they have alongside o' this one. And everything working beautifully "—he hesitated a moment—" leastwise in my division. An' why shouldn't it, Mr. Lavis, after three days and nights now of never closing an eye for more than two hours together ? But two nights and another day now, an' 'twill be all behind us. And something to put behind a man, that—it's to be a record-breakin' passage this, I can tell you. Well, let's be moving on."

Lavis followed Linnell to where a man in grimy blue dungarees was standing silent watch. Before him was a row of levers, and beside him a dial on which were words in very black letters : FULL SPEED, HALF SPEED, and so on. To one side was a disc around which two coloured arrows, one red and one green, were racing. A gong was at the man's ears. At his feet was a pit, into which a great mass of highly polished steel was driving up and down ceaselessly.

Linnell studied the coloured arrows as they sped around the disc. " Port engine a bit the best of it ? " He had to speak into the man's ear to make himself heard.

The man in dungarees nodded. " A wee bit, sir."

" How's all else ? "

" Couldn't be better, sir." He had to yell to make himself heard. " Are we holding our own, sir ? "

" A full revolution better than any watch since we left port."

The man nodded as if he had been expecting it, but presently chuckled and swung one toe playfully towards the glittering grey crosshead as it went driving down into the pit. " A full revolution ! " he echoed—" t-t-t "—and spat with obvious significance into the pit.

" T-t-t——" mimicked Linnell, and slapped him lightly on the shoulder as he turned away. " Will you go farther, or wait here, Mr. Lavis ? "

" I'll wait here, and stand part of the watch with Andie."

" Very good ! I'll pick you up later."

Lavis, standing beside Andie, was gazing into the pit. He pointed to the great crosshead driving by. " If that were to fly out and go through the bottom of the ship, Andie, would it sink her ? "

Andie projected his lower lip. " It *might* sink her, sir, though it don't seem possible like. But if it *did* sink her, 'twould be *about* the only way *to* sink her, sir."

Lavis let his eyes roam above and about him. Andie observed the direction of his gaze. " A wonderful sight, aren't they ? " he commented. " What wi' so many polished rods an' shafts all whity-grey, an' all them many beams an' bars so beautiful green an' red ! "

Lavis, still interested in the wonderful machinery, felt the deck lifted the least bit under him. It was as if the ship had risen to a rolling head sea. He laid hold of a handy stanchion to steady himself, but he saw Andie, unsupported, go sliding easily, gently, irresistibly to the bulkhead behind them. Lavis saw Andie brace his legs, and then, remindful and resentful, bound back to his station and set a hand to each of two levers. The iron deck beneath them was still rolling easily ; from beneath the deck came a chafing noise, a slow, heavy grinding.

Lavis saw that, with hands to levers, eyes on indicator, and ears to gong, the man in dungarees had become oblivious to all but the expected order from the bridge. It came after a time—the warning clang and the needle pointing to ASTERN SLOW.

Andie shifted his levers. Rods and shafts reversed. Andie, eyes set on the bridge dial, waited.

Lavis could hear Linnell's voice sharply hailing somebody in the boiler-room

passage. Presently he saw him running by the bulkhead door; and then, from the far end of the passage, his voice cracking out like a whip: "Back, I say! Back, you dogs, back to your stations! I'll tell you when you're to go."

He came bounding in then to where Lavis and Andie were, up the narrow iron ladder, up the wider one above it. Again Lavis heard him: "You thought to get ahead of me, eh—and breed panic above?"

A silence, and then Linnell's voice again, no more controlled: "You there, Wallace? Well, stay there. An' let not a single one of 'em pass without orders. Shoot 'em down if you have to, but keep 'em below."

The ship was still backing. *Wh-r-r-g-g!* went the gong. "Stop!" commanded the indicator. Andie shifted the levers. The tremendous machinery hung motionless.

All was quiet. Not a quiver from out of the great compartment. Lavis saw through the grating over his head the figure of the chief hurriedly descending. He saw him turn, pause a moment at the head of the narrow ladder, and then come sliding down.

"Doing our best, some of 'em will get up above," he said quietly. "But we've enough left for a watch." He stepped to Andie's side, all the while with his eyes roaming over the machinery. "She answered her bells promptly?"

"To the stroke, sir."

"Good! Stay by her. Pass the word to me if aught goes wrong."

He was through the bulkhead door and into the passage-way before he had completed the order.

Lavis saw Andie pout his lower lip, and with a "T-t-t——" shift his gaze to the pit. "It's too bad!" burst from him, and he spat into the pit. "See there!" he called out to Lavis.

Lavis nodded. He had already noticed it. There was a foot or so of water in the pit.

"How the deuce came it there?" Andie stooped and scooped a handful of it, tasted it, and held it up for Lavis to view. "Salt! *And* cold. T-t-t——" Andie let his breath whistle softly through his parted teeth.

The water was rising. By and by it was over the top of the pit and crawling across the grimy deck. Andie looked about for relief.

"I'll tell him." volunteered Lavis.

"Thank you, sir. An' you might say, sir, there must be somethin' wrong wi' the bulkhead doors. They aren't closed yet."

Lavis met Linnell returning in the passage-way. They stepped back together.

"She's hard hit," said Linnell, "though there's few know it yet. An' won't in a hurry."

"Then I'd better be going above?"

"That's right, do. Will you be back this way again?"

Lavis let his hand rest lightly on Andie's head. "I'm not sure." He extended his hand to Linnell. "If I don't see you again, good luck and good-bye."

"Good luck to you, Mr. Lavis." The engineer stepped closer and whispered: "If any honest chance offers to leave the ship, leave her."

IV

LAVIS found his way through the crew's quarters to the lowest sleeping deck of steerage. Here a few old people and some children, too discouraged, too indifferent, or too helpless, were clinging to their bunks. On the next deck he found a gathering in the open space surrounding a freight hatch. One whom he knew for a Polish woman, with her baby at her breast, was on the edge of the crowd, and, like most of the others, glancing up to see what was doing on the higher decks. The Polish woman was too concerned with her baby to see exactly what they were doing on that high deck where all the boats were, but another woman was telling her how it was.

Lavis stepped closer and listened. She was telling, the tall one, how there were many men running about excitedly—ship's men with only shirts above their waists some, and others with coats buttoned up. And they were pulling and hauling and knocking away blocks. Such a clear night one could see them, too—see their forms and hear their blows and shouts. The woman with the baby nodded. Without looking up she could hear the blows. And now the electric light had come, resumed the tall one; she could see that many women had gathered there, and some were pushing forward and others were pushing back, and now women—yes, and a man—were being put into a boat.

"And now the boat is lowered," resumed the tall one.

"I can hear them," said the young

mother. "And now it is rowing away from the ship in the dark."

"And there is another," informed the tall one, by and by.

"I can hear that, too, rowing away in the dark. And from the water—do you hear it, too, baby?—such a lonesome cry in the darkness."

At that moment Lavis spoke to her in her own language. The young mother greeted him warmly. "Ah-h, baby," she said, "here is the good gentleman who lives in the country where your father is waiting." She turned from the baby to ply Lavis with rapid questions in Polish.

What did that mean—the boats leaving the great ship? Surely it must be true what the men had said, the ship's men—that there was no danger? Surely it must be true that such a monster of a ship, it could not sink? Surely it could not!

"Wait, I will return," said Lavis to her, and stepped over to where two stewards were on guard over a gate. One, observing him, turned to the other and remarked, with vast negligence: "A silly lot, steerage, aren't they? Always airin' a growl about something or other, as if ship's rulin's was a-goin' to be changed for the likes o' them!"

"I would like to get to the upper deck," interrupted Lavis.

"*You* would like to get to the upper deck, would you? And who, may I ask, do you take yourself for, a-trying to speak like a toff?" The man turned his back to Lavis. "Swine!" he repeated to his mate.

Lavis glanced down at himself. He had overlooked the effect of the old linen duster and the old cap.

"When *he* gets to 'arbour, of course there'll be tug-boat visitors and customs officers arskin' for 'im, won't there?"

The other cast half an eye on Lavis. "When the class will look down on the tops o' their heads and remark: 'What a mob of 'em there! How many of 'em did you cart along this time, captain?' I fancy he'll have only to cock his car up to hear 'em."

"Silly foreigners, most of 'em."

Lavis returned to the Polish mother. "Come," he said. "There is another way out of here."

"Please, sir, the big, jolly Irisher—what is she saying?"

Lavis listened to the big, jolly Irish girl, who, however, was not now so jolly. Lavis had seen a thousand like her gathering kelp on the west Irish coast—tall, deep-bosomed, barefooted girls with black hair to the waist, and glorious dark eyes. She was standing on the hatch, and pointing at the moment to one of the crew who had passed.

"Wet to his knees. Where is it he should be getting wet to his knees? And another one. And where is it they are going? And is it we that has to stay here till that kind"—she pointed to the two men guarding the steerage gate—"are pleased to let us out? Haven't we as much right to our lives as them that lives higher up? Five hundred of us here, women and childther, and which of them above cares whether we live or die?"

She pointed to a woman with her brood clinging to her hands and skirts. "Look at that poor woman with her five childther. And that poor little thing"—she indicated the Polish woman—"that has a husband waiting for herself and the baby in New York. And that other one, and that one, and that one. God in heaven, mothers with their children to their breasts, and not to be given a chance to live at all! If 'tis a mother I was, and a child to my breast, it's not images of men in uniforms would hinder me from saving my baby this night! And myself with my baby, if my baby was in need of me and I could."

The two ship's men on guard were gazing, not down at the steerage, but up at the higher decks, when a dozen or more of the steerage women swept across the deck.

"Come, now." Lavis took the Polish mother's hand.

"Sh-h!" she warned softly. "He is sleeping."

Lavis, nodding that he saw, helped her carefully to her feet, and led her through the now unguarded gate, and by way of several ladders to that high deck where the boats were.

A boat was all but ready for lowering. The last woman had been crowded into it. The Polish woman removed her shawl and wrapped it around her baby. "Baby!" Lavis could hear her saying over and over again. "Oh, my baby! my baby boy!" but softly, so as not to awaken him. She stepped into the circle of light which surrounded the boat and the ship's people. "Sa-ave bai-by," she said in English, and held shawl and baby up at the end of her outstretched arms.

The man had swung the boat clear, and

was about to lower away, when the Polish woman darted under the arms of the ship's men and thrust her baby into the bosom of the nearest woman in the lifeboat. " Sa-ave bai-by ! " she breathed, and darted back into the crowd.

V

WHEN Cadogan went forward he wished to see something other than the loom of the low-lying, misty, white berg against the sky. He peered down over the bow. He bent low his ear to catch the purr of eddying waters.

He turned sharply on his heel, and went below.

When Cadogan reappeared he went straight to his state-room. Here, in the cabin sleeping quarters below the promenade deck, nothing disturbing had happened. When such passengers as were about to turn in became aware of that slow lurch and easy stoppage, they had stepped out into the passage-ways, and asked each other what was the matter, which question was answered almost immediately by ship's people, who came hurrying among them with reassuring words. " It's nothing, ladies and gentlemen. If you will go back to your rooms, ladies and gentlemen—it's nothing." And they had gone back to their rooms.

Cadogan turned on the light in his room and hauled out his suit-case. He found a pad of paper, found also a fountain-pen, shook the pen to make sure there was ink in it, let down the covering of the wash-basin for a desk, laid thereon a small photograph of a beautiful face and head *en profile*, and began to write. He set down " Dear," and paused. He smiled faintly, set down " Helen " after it, and went unhesitatingly on :

" This afternoon, over our tea, as I concluded one of my almost endless monologues, you may remember you said, ' You'd better watch out or some day you will be having your last adventure.' Well, I have had it. Not with this ship—no, no, my last adventure was a dream of you. I was on the dock, about to board a steamer for South America, when I saw you step out of your cabin. And so I came aboard here. I am glad I came.

" You brushed me in passing, as I stood beside the gang-plank trying not to stare at you ; but you did not know that—did you ? —although for an instant I thought you did. It was the conceit of youth, that thought."

Cadogan held up his pen. The sound of hurrying feet from the passage-way, the noise of fists pounding on doors, of high-pitched voices asking and answering questions, broke on his ears. He listened, stared at the air-port for a moment, and resumed his writing :

" About this time a steward is pounding on your door and *him*forming you that you are to go on deck and be ready to go into the boats. Nothing serious, they are saying. The poor man who tells you so, I am sure, does not suspect, but whoever told him to carry that message knew better. Perhaps it is just as well he does not suspect.

" When the steamer stopped that time, it was because she struck on the submerged shelf of an iceberg. In three hours—or less—she will go down, and all who happen to be on board will go with her. They should be able to stow a thousand women and children in the boats, and these should be picked up soon after daylight, if the sea stays smooth and the weather clear. To-night's indications were clear weather and a calm sea for at least another day, so that will be all right.

" You will be in one of the boats, and —safe. It would be like you not to want to go. If I hear that you do not, then someone will see that you do. But I shall not be by you when you leave the ship, for I do not want you to read in my face that I know I am not to see you again—nor to bother you in any way. I shall be looking on as you leave, and what you said to-night will not then matter. As you go over the side my prayer will go with you."

There came a sharp knock on the door. " Come in ! " he called. It was his own steward, who thrust his head past the door's edge. " Saloon passengers are to go on deck, Mr. Cadogan."

" Why ? "

" I 'ave no idea, sir. Orders, sir. I was to hinform the saloon passengers as how they were to go on deck, and women and children into boats."

" All right. Thank you. And, Hames."

" Yes, sir ? "

" You get hold of Miss Huttle's maid,

and have her tell Miss Huttle to be sure to wrap up warm. Be sure she gets that right—to wrap up warm. Two sets of everything all round. Got that right?"

"Two sets—yes, sir."

"That's all, Hames."

"'K you, sir."

"And so it has come to write the adieu which I would dread to have to speak. Three days only have I known you, but a man may build his life anew in three days, and this last adventure of mine has been such as in my visionary boyhood days I used to mark out for myself in rosy dreams.

"I have the little snapshot you gave me yesterday. I will have it with me to the end, and your face in it will be the last thing I kiss this side of eternity. And so good-bye, dear heart, and don't worry for me. Who lives by the sword, *et cetera*. It had to come to such ending, I suppose, though rather a joke, isn't it, to be lost on an ocean liner crossing the Atlantic in these days?

"To-day, with you, I saw the sun go down 'twixt purple bars, and what is the little matter of dying to that? And it is a consolation to know you will not mourn me. Good night, dear heart, and may God have ever a tender eye on you."

He sealed the envelope, and very carefully addressed it: "Miss Helen Huttle," placed it in his inside coat pocket, kissed the little photograph, and placed that also in his inside coat pocket.

He gazed about to see what else. His top-coat lay where he had last thrown it—across the edge of the berth. He shook his head at it, and from his wardrobe took a heavy ulster, scanned it approvingly, and put it on. He hauled his steamer trunk out from under his berth, and from a corner of it dragged a thick wallet. He ran his thumb along the edge of the bills within it. He stuck the wallet into his hip pocket. The butt of a magazine pistol peeped up at him. He laid it flat in the palm of his hand, shook his head, and threw it back. He took one more look round the room and stepped out into the passage-way.

A hurrying steward almost bumped into him. It was Hames. "She was told, Mr. Cadogan."

"Good! Now, something else. Later on Miss Huttle will be going into a boat. Before she goes, be sure you give her this letter. Not now—no. But up on deck, just before she goes."

"Yes, sir."

Cadogan sought the upper deck by way of the second-cabin quarters.

He came on to the boat-deck in the rear of the saloon passengers already gathered there. The first boat was clear. An officer stood at the stern of it. "Women and children!" he was calling out, and there was a rush to fill it.

"I don't see many children," said a voice.

"Do you ever—in saloon?" retorted another.

Cadogan, recognizing the second voice as Meade's and seeing that he was also in the rear of the crowd, stepped over beside him.

The boat was filled, and lowered in jumps and jerks. The passengers moved to the next boat. Half a dozen ship's men and an officer stood by.

"They're taking enough of the crew along," observed Meade.

"Not much gets by you," commented Cadogan.

"It's my business. I'll have to write a story about this later."

"Women and children!" called the officer.

The boat was filled, except for a space for men and officers. They jumped in, and the boat was lowered.

In the next boat two men passengers jumped in at the last moment. The officer in charge seemed not to see them. The crew said nothing.

"Must have friends at court," muttered Meade. "Though why anybody should choose the staying out all night half-frozen in those boats I don't understand, do you? But look—there's the major marshalling his battalions. Old ladies and young, pretty and otherwise—instinctively gallant, the major," observed Meade.

"We'll remember your friends in New York, major," two of the younger ones chorused.

"Be sure you do," he retorted. "And pay your bet with a box of chocolates when you're back aboard in the morning. But take care you keep those rugs round your feet in the meantime." He waved them smilingly down the side of the ship, but he was not smiling when he had turned his back to the ship's side and made his way into the crowd.

Cadogan shrank back of Meade. It was Miss Huttle who had stepped into the light, with Drissler in attendance. And not alone Drissler. She was fully dressed, with heavy furs in addition. Her smile was not less frequent, and apparently her tongue no less ready than usual, when she replied to the sallies of her escorts.

The blocks were knocked away, the falls overhauled for the next boat. Cadogan ached to jump in and help them with it.

"The worst of standing here, Meade," —Major Martin had taken his position by the side of the journalist—"is that, no matter how things are handled, we can no more interfere than if we were children in steerage. And yet some of us, Cadogan here, especially, could help out a lot."

Cadogan was not losing a finger's crook of Miss Huttle's actions; and yet he was listening to and studying Meade and Martin, the ship's officers and men, a steerage woman with a baby in a shawl, everybody and everything within sight and hearing. He could not help it. If he were one of a file of prisoners to be taken out and shot, his last curiosity would be to know what everybody was saying and doing—the executioners, the executed, himself, the spectators.

He noted the parting of bride and groom, and wondered what that groom would have given to go with her into the boat. He was taking note of the women who went reluctantly from the sides of their menfolk, one who refused to go at all, and many who could hardly be held back until their turn came. He studied the faces of the men who, by some mysterious dispensation, were allowed to go into the boats.

It was then that he saw Lavis. The woman with the baby in the shawl had, with a sublime gesture, abandoned her baby to a woman already in the boat, so that it might be saved. Lavis was standing behind her when she did it, and as she lost herself in the crowd Lavis had looked after her with such an expression of pity that Cadogan's attention had been attracted to him.

When Lavis turned to the circle of light again, his eyes met Cadogan's. "And you, too, know," thought Cadogan. Lavis came over to him. "I was wishing I could give her this big coat of mine," began Cadogan; "it might make things a little less miserable for her." Lavis's eyes thanked him. "I will find her and give it to her." Cadogan took it off. "I will see you again," said Lavis, and went off with the coat.

Cadogan saw a hundred moving sights about him without ever losing sight of Miss Huttle. On the other side of the ship he knew that a small gang of men were fighting for the possession of a boat for themselves. He could hear them—half-smothered murmurs, cries, blows, a sudden rare shriek, of which the other passengers seemed to have no conception. He thought of going to his room and getting his automatic pistol, and jumping in among them. But what good would it do? was his next thought. It would only be to substitute one set of dead men for another; and, besides, he would lose sight of her.

At last she walked over to where the boat was ready to lower. Before she stepped in she cast a long look above the heads of the crowd. The thought that she might be looking for him set Cadogan to trembling; but it was a thought which he did not allow to take possession of him. He drew farther back into the shadows. He saw her pale face peering out again from the crowded hats, toques, and hoods of the close-packed women as the boat was lowered.

She appeared to be still searching for someone in the crowd as the boat disappeared below the deck-rail. Cadogan forced his way to the rail to watch it. It was rolled from side to side, bumped against the ship's side, swung in and out as it descended. While yet some distance above the water it stuck. Cadogan could just make it out. The falls had fouled. With a jerk the stern dropped several feet on the run, and the boat hung again in air, now with bow up and stern down. There were screams and shouts. Cadogan was at the rail, ready to leap, when the bow suddenly dropped. The boat was level again. It was in the water and floating.

Cadogan remained by the rail, tracing the course of the little boat on the sea. When he could see the shadow of her no longer, nor hear the voices from her, he still stayed, pursuing in his imagination her course and position out there on the waters.

Reluctantly, he faced inboard. Meade and Martin were no longer there. He guessed they had gone into the smoking-room, and there he found them.

VI

MANY other passengers had returned to the smoking-room by the time Cadogan got there. Meade, Martin, and Vogel were

already seated at the corner table. Cadogan sat down with them.

From the farther corner of the room came a strident voice. " They were all of them foolish to go at all, that's what I say. They will be out there all night, and in the morning we will be laughing at them when they return aboard. See here. Please see here."

He opened and held up an illustrated advertising booklet. No one in the room could fail to see it. " Thirty-eight watertight compartments. See, there it is. Non-sinkable—that's the word. See for yourself, whoever cares. But there's people who fancy they know more about ships than the men who make a trade of building 'em." He stared round the room to see who would gainsay him. Nobody seemed to care to.

Vogel turned round to see who it was. " It's that chap who was auctioning off the ship's pool an hour or two ago," complained Vogel. " He never stops."

Major Martin's questioning eyes roamed from Cadogan to the assertive man at the farther corner and back to Cadogan. " What d'you make of him, Cadogan ? Is he worried himself, or what is he ? "

Cadogan shrugged his shoulders. " It is faith like his that fattens empires, major."

" And stupidity like his that loses them."

The man with the booklet had not abated the fervour of his reading announcements ; but those who were listening were listening without comment. Thus far, no one in the room had spoken aloud of danger except the man with the booklet. The effect of his loud insistence was to increase uneasiness.

A steward, with a face into which a white frost seemed to have bitten, burst into the smoking-room. He seemed to be hunting for someone who was not there. He revolved rapidly once in the middle of the room and vanished.

Everybody turned towards the door through which he disappeared, and then every head seemed to turn towards every other. The voice of the man with the booklet was lowered. Presently he ceased reading.

One man got up and went silently out. The door closed behind him. Another got up. One, two, three men followed him to the door. Several got up together. Another group was on its way, when suddenly there was a rush for the door. The man with the booklet, whiskered, fat, and red-necked, stared down in amaze. He gulped, blinked, heaved himself up, and lumbered after the others. Only the four gathered round the corner table remained.

Martin, with his thumbs hooked into his trousers pockets, was staring down between his knees. On his left was Vogel, the millionaire of the railroads. He was a tall, slope-shouldered man of fifty-five, bald at the top of his head. His forehead sloped back from speculative eyes. " Hi ! wake up there, major," he bawled almost unexpectedly. " That steward who came running in that time, you'd think he thought the ship was going down. What d'you imagine he wanted, major ? "

Martin raised his head and grinned at Vogel. " Lord knows—perhaps it was a tip."

On the table was a siphon of soda and some empty glasses. Martin selected one that had not been used, and, carefully gauging, poured about an inch of soda into the glass. " The ship going down, Mr. Vogel ? Heroes then we'd have to be "—he glanced at each in turn over the rim of his glass—" whether we liked it or not, wouldn't we ? What did you learn that time you went forward, Cadogan ? " He bit the question out unexpectedly.

Cadogan also helped himself to some soda-water, rolled it round in his mouth, swallowed it, and set down his glass. As if he had not heard Martin, he drew out his cigar-case and offered it to the soldier.

Martin nodded his thanks, took one, bit off the end, and, without looking away from Cadogan, lit up. Vogel took one, but as if by way of courtesy only, for he indicated no desire to smoke. Meade waved Cadogan away. He lit a cigarette of his own rolling. " Shortening my life smoking cigars," he explained.

The door opened. It was Lavis. With a pause and a bow, as if to ask their permission, he took the corner seat on the skylight. Cadogan, waiting until he saw Lavis seated, tendered him the cigar-case. Lavis shook his head.

" If you're afraid it's my last——"

" It's years since I've smoked."

" That saves me, for it *is* my last." With the word Cadogan threw the empty cigar-case on the table.

Meade picked up the case, a gun-metal one, with Cadogan's monogram in thin, flat silver letters on the side. " You throw that down, Cadogan, as if you wanted to give that away."

" Did it look that way ? " Cadogan took

ii from Meade's extended hand. "I've carried that a good many years." He stood up as he finished speaking, to reach for some matches from the next table.

"Clear, settled weather, and a smooth sea." He was gazing reflectively through the weather air-port as he spoke.

"Cadogan"—Meade was speaking—"give us some more of your adventures."

Cadogan half turned to see the clock. "It's too late to begin now."

"It's never too late. Just think, in your short life you have lived more volumes than I have written. You know more, ten times more, about real life than I do, and I'm twice your age nearly. I wonder"—he fanned the smoke from him—"would you mind dying after all you've been through?"

Cadogan was still standing. He set his left foot on the seat of his chair, his left elbow on his knee, and his chin in the heel of his left hand. By extending two long supple left fingers he could hold his cigar while he blew rings of smoke towards the air-port. He blew them now—once, twice, three times. "I don't know any healthy men who are eager to die, do you?"

"Meaning you don't want to go yourself?"

"No-o. And yet, if I had to go, any time now, I don't see where I could have any grumble. Somewhere, some time, it has to come. And yet I was wondering, only to-night, queerly enough——"

While Cadogan paused Meade was making mental notes of him. How wide and powerful the shoulders loomed, how trim the waist, the grace of the long white fingers, the smooth curves of the strong face, all brown below the eyes and white above. "What a fight you could put up," thought Meade, "and what a pity if anything should happen to you."

Cadogan ceased somersaulting his cigar-case. "Wouldn't it be queer, now, I was thinking—here I've drawn lots with Death in this same old North Atlantic a dozen times, and then to think of him coming along and grabbing a fellow off the deck of an ocean liner."

"That would be a joke," commented Meade.

Cadogan carefully knocked his cigar ashes on to the tray. "Wouldn't it?" His eyes and Martin's met.

With his eyes now on the ash-tray, Cadogan continued: "If I have left anybody worrying, or guessing, I can tell him where there is a collapsible lifeboat which will be safe in smooth water."

"There are women still aboard," said Martin.

"Eh, what's that?" Meade sat straight up.

"Yes, there are many women aboard. But when that lifeboat is launched there is going to be a grand fight to see who will get on it. A half-dozen armed men could hold it for themselves, but not for anybody else—women or men. What do you say, major? Would you be for that kind of a fight in the event of her sinking?"

Martin shook his head firmly. "I'd better shoot myself—or any other army or navy officer—than be saved where a ship-load of women went down."

"What do you say, Mr. Vogel?"

Vogel smiled uneasily. "You gentlemen of the sword and pen, how you do try our nerves at times! But in my circle neither do men honour the craven. With women still aboard, would I get into a boat and leave? Why, no."

"Do you mean, Cadogan"—all was silence when Meade spoke up—"do you mean there is a possibility that this ship will founder?"

Cadogan nodded twice, slowly.

"But for God's sake, when?"

"See"—he pointed to the deck at their feet—"the slant. Her bow is settling now."

No one spoke, and only Meade moved, and he to interlock his fingers and press his hands together, rest them on the edge of the table, and lower, for a moment, his head.

Only Cadogan seemed to remember that Lavis was on the skylight seat. During all the time that he was speaking, and, in a way, acting, Cadogan knew that Lavis had never ceased to study him.

"The raft?" asked Cadogan.

Lavis shook his head indifferently.

The soldier dropped the butt of his cigar straight down between his knees. Meade laid the ends of his fingers on the edge of the table, and stared at his nails.

Vogel sat a little higher in his chair. "Well, there's one thing. It has not been shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves in our family. For three generations now we have pursued a constructive policy. My son is almost of age. I hope he will not forget his responsibilities."

Major Martin stood up. "Shall we go

outside?" And with the word led the way. Meade got more slowly to his feet. "It doesn't seem real," he was addressing Cadogan; "so quiet! Do men die so easily?" With Vogel he walked after Martin.

Lavis had not moved from his seat. Cadogan walked half way to the door and returned. "You set me thinking to-night, Mr. Lavis, but I see now that it is you the Eternal Veritics should select to go down into the depths."

"No, no! Never immortality for me. I had my chance. I threw it away. I was dedicated to a sacred calling, Mr. Cadogan. I had almost achieved the heights, when—I fell. I sinned not only in body, but in spirit. To sin in body is to scorch the soul; but to sin in spirit, that is to consume the soul. Mine is but ashes. Yours is still a burning flame. And—but there is somebody at the door, I think, who wishes to speak to you."

As Cadogan reached the door the man retreated to the shadows of the deck. It was Hames, with a square envelope in his hand. "Miss Huttle, Mr. Cadogan," he whispered, "said I was to give you this. When there was nobody about, she said, sir."

Cadogan stepped to the light of the smoking-room air-port, held the sheet close up to the glass, and read:

"It was all a mistake after dinner to-night. I will tell you when next we meet—if ever we do meet. But you must see that we do meet. You must. The passengers do not know, even you may not know, but it is true—the ship is going to sink. I am frightened—dreadful thoughts—if you were only near.

"You must save yourself. You can, if you will. You can do the impossible. You have done it before in play. Do it to-night if only for the woman who loves you.

"I know you will never go into the boats, but after they are gone, when you can no longer help another, I ask you to save yourself—save yourself not for yourself, but for me.

"A woman who loves—remember you said it yourself—hers is the call that no man has the choice of refusing. A woman who loves you and whose love is all for you, will be calling, calling, calling, as you read this, from out on the dark sea.

"Come, come, come, O Beloved, to me at last. If you do not come I shall believe always that you do not care. But I know you will come. For I know you do care.

"HELEN."

Cadogan stared at the sea about him, at the sky above him. He rubbed his forehead. "'Come, come, oh, come!'" he murmured. He drove his clenched fist against the air-port. "I'll come! I'll come!"

"Mr. Cadogan?" It was the steward.

"What is it?"

"There's queer talk going about between decks, sir. There will be desperate work doing to-night, if what they say is true, sir. I've a family in Southampton, sir, and I always tried to do my duty, sir."

"I never knew a better steward, Hames. Listen."

"'K you, sir. Yes, sir?"

"On the boat deck for'ard, port side—there's a collapsible lifeboat there. It's hid under a tarpaulin. A coil of rope is lying over the tarpaulin. Somebody is saving that for the finish—for a favoured few."

"I believe you, sir."

"Stand by it, and when they launch it jump aboard."

"But they will have spanners and wrenches, and such weapons, sir."

"They surely will. In the steamer trunk in my room you will find a magazine pistol."

"Yes, sir. 'K you, sir."

"But promise me you'll hurt nobody except those who try to hurt you."

"I'll promise, sir. An' I'll remember also I 'ave a missus an' three kiddies in Southampton, sir."

"And don't forget you have them, either."

"No, sir. 'K you, sir. But I never 'andled a magazine one. Any complications, sir?"

"Not many. You find the trigger, curl your finger round it, put the muzzle to the man's head who means you harm, and, if he persists, pull the trigger. It's very simple."

"Quite so, sir."

"Good luck to you. And don't forget—your pressing the trigger as long as you want to shoot. And here"—Cadogan drew from his hip pocket the wallet with the packet of bills—"put this in the bank when you get back—for the kiddies and missus."

"It's a hawful kindness to 'em, sir."

"All right. Good luck to you."

"Good luck to you, I s'y, sir." He vanished.

VII

FROM his seat Lavis had caught sight of the face of Cadogan as he read the sheet of paper held up to the air-port. His chin came down on his chest, remained there a moment, and then he stood up slowly, and also went out on deck, but by way of the door opposite to that which Cadogan had taken.

The passengers were gathering thickly on the top-deck. There was now no restriction, ship's people had ceased their supervision, and many steerage passengers were now crowding up to join first and second class on the higher decks.

"In the last death plunge," mused Lavis, "steerage may go first, if so be it pleases them."

He made out a couple standing hand in hand like children. He knew them, a couple from second cabin, and of the faith of the prophets of old.

"Surely God will welcome you," murmured Lavis, and touched their clasped hands in passing.

He halted. A young man was staring out on the wide sea. Lavis remembered the bride and groom who had been so rapturously gazing out on the sea together before the collision. This was the groom, and he was speaking to another young man who was treading the deck restlessly, four paces one way, four paces back. "They said there was a lantern in the boat she was put in. I think I see it—a small light."

"Do you? I don't. How long were you married?"

"Four months."

"Oh-h! We were only ten weeks." With short, quick steps he resumed his striding.

Lavis leaned beside the young man at the rail. "I think I see the light you were looking for—there." He pointed.

"Yes, yes; that's it. See here!" He turned. "Why, he's gone!" He turned back and peered into Lavis's face. "There were ten of us, with our wives, returning from our wedding trips. We were going to have a supper together when we reached New York."

"But you are not afraid?"

"I am. But look there!" He pointed to the hundreds of steerage passengers who were still crowded together three decks below. "What chance did they give those women to-night? And my mother came over in steerage. And she is still alive. And she would stand me up before her and she'd say—I know: 'Dannie, boy, so you tell me you came away from a sinking ship and women and children behind you?'"

"But you are not sorry?"

"God! man, no! But only the night before last she all at once came close to me and said: 'Dannie, we're going to have a little baby.' And nothing more for a long time, me holding her. And then she whispers: 'And I hope he'll be a boy, and grow up to be a man like you, Dannie,' she said."

Lavis reached out and took his hand.

"And God help me! Already I had him grown up and was taking him out to see the Giants play."

"God help us all!" said Lavis; and passed on to the lowest open deck. Already the deck was taking on a more noticeable forward slant. He passed a man lashing together some chairs. He paused long enough to see that it was Cadogan, but, without discovering himself, he passed on to where an isolated man in dungarees leaned across the rail. It was Andie.

Lavis touched him on the arm. "How did you leave Mr. Linnell, Andie?"

Andie unfolded his arms and faced around. "How do you do, sir? He comes to, Mr. Lavis—an' 'twas somethin' beyond the fear o' death was in his eyes—an' he says: 'Andie, your work's done. 'Twas her death blow they give her, an' she'll not live much longer now. Go above, you, now, Andie,' he says, 'and I'll stay here.' 'If you don't mind, I'll stay with you, sir,' I says. 'I've no call to leave this ship while one passenger is aboard of her. An' more, Mister Linnell, many an' many's the watch I've stood under you, an', 'less you forbids it, I'll stand this last watch wi' you. Only, if you won't forbid me, sir, I'll go up on deck at the last, an' have a look at God's own sky before she goes.'"

"And what did he say, Andie?"

"He said naught to that, sir, excep' to shake hands wi' me. I was that embarrassed wi' the grup o' the hand he gave, I takes out my pipe an' baccy from the locker, where the sea wasn't yet reached to, an' I cuts myself a pipeful an' lights up, and he does the same, sir."

" An' we finished our pipeful together, an' he stands up an' says, ' Good luck to you, Andie, lad,' and I knew he was wishin' to be alone. An' so, ' Good luck to you, Mister Linnell,' I says, an' we gave each other another long grup o' the hand. I was wantin' to tell him he was the best chief ever I worked under, but he wasn't ever the kind, y'see, to be praisin' to his face. An' at the top of the ladder I looks down, an' there he was wi' his arms folded across the shiny brass railin', an' he lookin' down, a-wearylike, on to his engines."

" A good man, Andie. Good-bye, and God bless you ! "

" Good-bye, sir. The same to you." Andie turned to the rail, and, again with folded arms, once more set his face to the impassive sea.

Lavis passed on to where, from a tarpaulined hatch, a Catholic priest was saying a litany, while around him a body of kneeling men and women were responding. He had donned his cassock, and a shining silver crucifix was on his breast, and his biretta at his feet.

Lavis knelt and prayed also. He rose from his knees to go to the side of the Polish woman. He found her weeping.

" Why do you weep ? Do you fear death so very much ? "

" I weep for my baby."

" But your baby is safe—out there in the boat. They will bring him to his father, who will be waiting on the dock in New York."

" Yes, yes ; but who will give him the breast when he wakes ? "

" Who will give—— Father in heaven ! Is not her love great enough ? Come—come with me." Lavis helped her up.

VIII

CADOGAN looked into the smoking-room. Lavis was gone. He hesitated, wheeled quickly, returned to the deck, sought the nearest gangway, and rapidly ascended four decks. He traversed one passage-way, another, and entered what looked like a carpenter's shop, where was a thick-topped wooden table with its legs held by angle irons to the floor.

Cadogan crawled under the table, hunched his shoulders, straightened his legs, and had the table up by the roots. He stepped out from under it, grasped it across the beam, raised it high, brought two of the legs down against the iron deck, once, twice ; reversed the ends, and brought the other two legs down to the deck, once, twice. The legs were gone.

He set the table-top on his head. A man stood in the doorway. Cadogan motioned him out of the way. " Where yuh goin' with that ? " snarled the man. Cadogan set the end of his plank against the man's chest, walked straight ahead, and stepped over the man's body. In the passage-way someone seized his table from behind. Cadogan let go entirely, wheeled sharply, caught the man by the collar and trousers, smashed him against the bulkhead, and, as the man dropped the plank, threw him a dozen feet down the passage. The man rose to his feet and ran the other way. Cadogan picked up his plank and resumed his way.

At a place where a boat-falls from above dropped past the ship's rail Cadogan laid down his table-top. This was on the lowest open deck, where not many people would be coming to bother him ; but to reduce the chance of loss, he set his table-top up on edge above the scupperway, and in the shadow of the rail, while he went off for an armful of steamer chairs.

He needed lashings for his chairs. A transverse passage-way opened on to the deck almost where he stood. State-rooms opened off either side of the passage. The door of the nearest room was locked. " More foolish obstacles," he muttered. " Didn't intend anybody should steal anything while they were gone, did they ? " He set one foot under the door-knob, rested his back against the bulkhead across the narrow aisle, and straightened his leg. The lock gave way, the door swung open. " When they return I hope they won't miss the fine bed sheets," thought Cadogan, and swished them—one, two—from the berths, with the blankets and one pillow. He slit the hemmed edges of the sheets, and tore them into strips lengthwise. With these strips he lashed his chairs compactly together. The chairs in turn he lashed to the heavy plank.

Cadogan had taken his dinner coat, waistcoat, and linen shirt off to work more freely. Now he looked about for the coat. All the while he had been working he was not unaware that forms of men had flitted by him, and that more than one had stopped, as if curious to know what he was at. He knew that more than one of these were now

prowling within leaping distance, and that from them were coming muffled words of comment. Also he was not unaware that the ship was nearing her end. He could detect the first pitching of her hull, the settling of the deck under his feet, even as he could hear the half-tones of the menacing voices from out of the shadows. He was aware, too, that a despairing multitude were massing on the decks above him.

Up there, he knew, they were preparing to meet the end in a hundred different fashions. Up there would be those who smiled and those who cried, those who joked or moaned, who prayed or blasphemed.

Cadogan, having found his coat, laid it on a bitt near by, while he should launch his little raft. He balanced it on the rail, inserted a hook under one of his lashings at each end, folded his blankets on top, and, with a rope in each hand, paid out carefully, slowly. He could not have lowered a human body more tenderly. Easily, gently, he felt it settle on the bosom of the sea. He took a turn of his falls round a near-by bitt, and, always with one eye peeping sidewise into the shadows, reached for his coat. In the pocket of that coat was the photograph of his beloved.

"You've everything fixed nicely, have you, matie?"

Cadogan had had his eye out for him, and was expecting some such salutation; and the revolver within two feet of his head was also not unexpected.

"Everything nice, yes," responded Cadogan, with his coat in his hand.

"I'm glad o' that, matie, because, you see, I'm needing it."

"Would you take that from a man after all the work he put in on it?" He was kneading the coat into a ball in his right hand. With his left hand he took in a hole or two in his belt.

"You *are* a soft 'un. And a swell toff, too. You'll 'ave to st'y ashore, matie. I'm needing that tidy little floatin' thing you've moored below, and I'm plannin' to take it."

"Well, why don't you take it?"

"No larkin'. I'm fightin' for my life."

"I've been fighting for more than my life or yours, and——"

His right arm had been hanging loosely down by his side. He snapped his right forearm against his hip. The coat, in a tight ball, was jolted into the man's face, as Cadogan's left arm shot up and caught the man's pistol wrist. His right had followed the coat, and gripped the man's throat. He had no mind for a scuffle which would attract attention, nor did he wish the man when he dropped overboard to fall too near his raft; so that, with his finger to the man's windpipe, he bore him along the passage-way towards the stern of the ship. The tide was setting that way. The man was kicking out with both legs, striking out with his free hand. Cadogan held the man's arm over the rail the while he twisted the pistol wrist. The revolver dropped overboard. Cadogan took a fresh hold of him, spun around with him as if it was a sixteen-pound hammer he was whirling, and let him fly. Cadogan hurried back to his raft.

A man was standing by the falls and calling down to somebody below: "How is it now?"

There was no answer. The man by the falls repeated his question. Only silence from below.

Cadogan was looking for his coat, when the man grasped the falls and swiftly lowered himself over the side. Cadogan let be his coat, and slid down the falls after him. His feet fetched up against the man's fingers. He pressed with all his weight. The man cursed softly, let go his hold, and fell into the sea. Cadogan dropped after him. When the man came up Cadogan gripped him by the throat and held him under water.

The dim outline of another fellow was standing erect on the end of the little raft. "Norrie, me lad, it's a tidy little floater with nice warm blankets, but it will never hold up two," came from the man on the raft. Cadogan could see a long spanner, or bar, held ready on his shoulder. The man in the water was now twining his legs about him, whereupon, still clinging to his man, Cadogan dived porpoise-like head down into the sea. When he felt his feet under he kicked once, twice, three times powerfully.

When he came up he was alone.

He clung to one of the hooks of the falls to get his breath. A cap floated up to him. He smiled grimly. "A trophy of war," he said, and set it on his head. The man on the end of the raft poised himself above him, and brought down the long spanner at the cap. Cadogan diverted the blow with his free forearm, and before the other could recover wrenched the spanner from him and dropped it into the sea. "Oh! ho! that's how it is, is it, Norrie, me lad?" He swung

one foot viciously at Cadogan's hand where it was gripped round the hook. Cadogan swooped again with his free hand, caught the man by the swinging ankle, and hauled him into the sea. He released his grip of the man's ankle, only to shift it to his throat. The man seized Cadogan's wrist with both hands. Cadogan, hanging to the hook with one hand and gripping the man's throat with the other, continued to squeeze the man's throat. The man's legs kicked convulsively. Cadogan still squeezed. When the man stopped kicking, Cadogan forced the man gradually under water, and eased up on his grip.

With hands to the falls and feet against the ship's side, Cadogan climbed to the deck where he had left his coat. This time he found it, kicked to one side and trampled upon. But the little photograph was still there—in the inside pocket.

He took off his cap, the cap of the drowned man, while he kissed the little photograph. "Coming, coming, oh, coming!" he murmured.

"Have you room for a passenger?" came in a man's voice from the dark.

Cadogan whirled. "Passenger? Passenger! I've fought and schemed and—— Oh!"

It was Lavis; and, clinging to his hand, was somebody in a long ulster which swept the deck.

"It's the woman—you remember her?—who passed her baby boy into the boat so that he would be saved."

Cadogan remained silent.

"A few minutes ago I found her. She was weeping for her baby. I asked her why she should be weeping now, now that her baby was safe. And she answered me: 'But who will be there to give him the breast when he wakes?'"

The right hand of Cadogan, which held the cap, rested palm up on the ship's rail. His fingers clenched around the cap.

"If Christ on earth were to be with us once more," went on Lavis softly, "would He not say again: 'Greater love hath no man than this'? 'Who will be there to give him the breast when he wakes?'—and she about to die. Have you room for her as a passenger on your raft?"

"It will only bear up one." He rolled the hand on the rail, so that the palm was underneath. He unclasped his fingers. The cap dropped into the sea. "She shall be the one."

Together the two went down into the sea, and lived to hear the last, long, low, terrible moan. And then the disturbed sea was quiet again.

* * * *

In the rosy flush of a beautiful dawn a woman on a tiny raft drifted down to her crying baby to comfort him.

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The Heart at Twenty

A maid, a widower and a wound that healed

By W. J. LOCKE

THE girl stood at the end of the little stone jetty, her hair and the ends of her cheap fur boa and her skirts all fluttering behind her in the stiff north-east gale. Why any one should choose to stand on a jetty on a raw December afternoon with the wind in one's teeth was a sufficient problem for a comfort-loving elderly man like myself, and I pondered over it as I descended the slope leading from the village to the sea. It was nothing, thought I, but youth's animal delight in physical things. A few steps brought me in view of her face in half profile, and I saw that she did not notice wind or spray, but was staring out to sea with an intolerable wistfulness. A quick turn in the path made me lose the profile. I cursed the road that ran along the shore, and walked rapidly along the jetty. Arriving within hailing distance I called her.

"Viviette!"

She pivoted round like a weather-cock in a gust, and with a sharp cry leaped forward to meet me. Her face was aflame with a great hope and joy. I have seen, to my gladness, that expression once before worn by a woman. As soon as she recognized me, however, the joy vanished, killed outright.

"Oh, it's you," she said, with a quivering lip.

"I am sorry, my dear," said I, taking her hand. "I can't help it. I wish from my heart I were somebody else."

She burst into tears. I put my arm around her and drew her to me, and patted her, and said, "There, there!" in the blundering masculine way. Having helped to bring her into the world twenty years before, I could claim fatherly privileges.

"Oh, doctor," she sobbed, dabbing her pretty young eyes with a handkerchief, "do forgive me. Of course I am glad to see you. It was the shock. I thought you were a ghost. No one ever comes to Ravetot."

"Never?" I asked mildly.

The tears flowed afresh. I leaned against the parapet of the jetty for comfort's sake, and looked around me. Ravetot-sur-Mer was not the place to attract visitors in December. A shingle beach with a few fishing boats hauled out of reach of the surf; a miniature casino, like an impudently large summerhouse, shuttered-up, weather-beaten and desolate; a weather-beaten, desolate and shuttered-up Hotel de l'Univers, and a perky deserted villa or two, on the embankment; a cliff behind them, topped by a little grey church; the road that led up the gorge losing itself in the turn—that was all that was visible of Ravetot-sur-Mer. A projecting cliff bounded the bay at each side, and in front seethed the grey, angry channel.

It was an Aceldama of a spot in winter, and only a matter of peculiar urgency had brought me thither. Viviette and her decrepit rascal of a father were tied to Ravetot by sheer poverty. He owned a pretty villa half a mile inland, and the rent he obtained for it during the summer months enabled them to live in some miraculous way the rest of the year.

They, the curé, and the fisher folk were the sole winter inhabitants of the place. The nearest doctor lived at Illerville, twenty kilometres away, and there was not even an educated farmer in the neighbourhood. Yet I could hot help thinking that my little friend's last remark was somewhat disingenuous.

"Are you quite sure, my dear," I said, "that no one ever comes to Ravetot?"

"Has father told you?" she asked tonelessly.

"No. I guessed it. I have extraordinary powers of divination. And the somebody has been making my little girl miserable."

"He has broken my heart," said Viviette.

I pulled the collar of my fur-lined coat above my ears which the north-east wind was biting. Being elderly and heart-whole

I am sensitive to cold. I proposed that we should walk up and down the jetty while she told me her troubles, and I hooked her arm in mine.

"Who was *he?*" I asked. "And what was he doing here?"

"Oh, doctor, what does it matter?" she answered tearfully. "I never want to see him again."

"Don't fib," said I. "If the confounded blackguard were here now——"

"But he isn't a blackguard!" she flashed. "If he were, I shouldn't be so miserable. I should forget him. He is good and kind and noble and everything that is right. I couldn't have expected him to act otherwise—it was awful, horrible—and when you called me by name I thought it was he."

"And the contradictious feminine did very much want to see him," said I.

"I suppose so," she confessed.

I looked down at the pretty face and saw that it was wan and pinched.

"You have been eating little and sleeping less. For how long?" I demanded sternly.

"For a week," she said pitifully.

"We must change all that. This abominable hole is a kind of cold storage for depression."

She drew my arm tighter. She had always been an affectionate little girl, and now she seemed to crave human sympathy and companionship.

"I don't mind it now. It doesn't in the least matter where I am. Before he came I used to hate Ravetot, and long for the gaiety and brightness of the great world. I used to stand here for hours and just long and long for something to happen to take us away; and it seemed no good. Here I was for the rest of time—with nothing to do day after day but housework and sewing and reading, while father sat by the fire, with his little roulette machine and Monte Carlo averages and paper and pencil, working out the wonderful system that is going to make our fortune. We'll never have enough money to go to Monte Carlo for him to try it, so that is some comfort. One would have thought he had had enough of gambling."

She made the allusion, very simply, to me—an old friend. Her father had gambled away a fortune, and in desperation had forged another man's name on the back of a bill, for which he had suffered a term of imprisonment. His relatives had cast him out. That was why he lived in poverty-stricken seclusion at Ravetot-sur-Mer. He was not an estimable old man, and I had always pitied Viviette for being so parented. Her mother had died years ago. I thought I would avoid the painful topic.

"And so," said I, after we had gone the length of the jetty in silence and had turned again, "one day when the lonely little princess was staring out to sea and longing for she knew not what, the young prince out of the fairy tale came riding up behind her, and stayed just long enough to make her lose her heart, and then rode off again."

"Something like it—only worse," she murmured. And then, with a sudden break in her voice: "I will tell you all about it. I shall go mad if I don't. I haven't a soul in the world to speak to. Yes, he came. He found me standing at the end of the jetty. He asked his way, in French, to the cemetery, and I recognized from his accent that he was English like myself. I asked him why he wanted to go to the cemetery. He said that it was to see his wife's grave."

"The only Englishwoman buried here was a Mrs. Everest, who was drowned last summer. This was the husband. He explained that he was in the Indian Civil Service, and was now on furlough. Being in Paris he thought he would like to come to Ravetot, where he could have quiet, in order to write a book."

"I understood it was to see his wife's grave," I remarked.

"He wanted to do that as well. You see, they had been separated for some years—judicially separated. She was not a nice woman. He didn't tell me so; he was too chivalrous a gentleman. But I had heard about her from the gossip of the place. I walked with him to the cemetery. I know a well-brought up girl wouldn't have gone off like that with a stranger."

"My dear," said I, "in Ravetot-sur-Mer she would have gone off with a hippogriffin."

She pressed my arm. "How understanding you are, doctor, dear."

"I have an inkling of the laws that govern humanity," I replied ironically, yet secretly flattered by my young lady's tribute. "Well, and after the pleasant trip to the cemetery?"

"He asked me whether the café at the top of the hill was really the only place to stay at in Ravetot. It's dreadful, you know—no one goes there but fishermen and farm labourers—and it *is* the only place.

The hotel is shut up out of the season. I said that Ravetot didn't encourage visitors during the winter. He looked disappointed and said that he would have to find quiet somewhere else. Then he asked whether there wasn't any house that would take him in as a boarder."

She paused.

"Well?" I inquired.

"Oh, doctor, he seemed so strong and kind, and his eyes were so frank, and I knew that he was everything that a man ought to be. We were friends at once, and I hated the thought of losing him. It is not gay at Ravetot with only Jeanne to talk to from week's end to week's end. And then we are so poor—and you know we do take in paying guests when we can get them."

"I understand perfectly," said I.

She nodded. "That was how it all happened. Would a nice girl have done such a thing?"

I replied that if she knew as much of the ways of nice girls as I did, she would be astounded. She smiled wanly and went on with her artless story.

Of course Mr. Everest jumped at the suggestion. It is not given to every young and unlamenting widower to be housed beneath the same roof as so delicious a young woman as Viviette. He brought his luggage and took possession of the best spare room in the villa, while Vivictte and old, slatternly Jeanne, the *bonne à tout faire*, went about with agitated minds and busy hands attending to his comforts.

Old Widdrington, however, in his morose chimney corner, did not welcome the visitor. He growled and grumbled, and rated his daughter for not having doubled the terms. Didn't she know they wanted every penny they could get? Something was wrong with his roulette machine which ought to be sent to Paris for repairs. Where was the money to come from? Viviette's father is the most unscrupulous, selfish old curmudgeon of my acquaintance.

Then, according to my young lady's incoherent and parenthetical narrative, followed idyllic days. Viviette chattered to Mr. Everest in the morning, walked with him in the afternoon, pretended to play the piano to him in the evening, and in between times, sat with him at meals.

The inevitable happened. She had met no one like him before. He represented the strength and the music of the great world. He flashed upon her as the revelation of the vague visions that had floated before her eyes when she stared seaward in the driving wind.

That the man was a bit in love with her seems certain. I think that one day, when a wayside byre was sheltering them from the rain, he must have kissed her. A young girl's confidences are full of details; but the important ones are generally left out. They can be divined, however, by the old and experienced. At any rate, Viviette was radiantly happy, and Everest appeared contented to stay indefinitely at Ravetot and watch her happiness.

Thus far the story was ordinary enough. Given the circumstances, it would have been extraordinary if my poor little Viviette had not fallen in love with the man and if the man's heart had not been touched. In his position, thrown with Viviette for nearly three weeks, noon and night I, venerable philosopher that I am, would have made a doting idiot of myself.

If Everest had found the girl's feelings too deep for his response and had precipitately bolted with a confused sense of acting honourably toward her, the story would also have been commonplace. The cause of his sudden riding away was peculiarly painful. Somehow I cannot blame him; and yet I am vain enough to imagine that I should have acted otherwise.

One morning Everest asked her if Jeanne might search his bedroom for a twenty-franc piece which he must have dropped on the floor. In the afternoon her father gave her twenty francs to get a postal order; he was sending to Paris for some fresh mechanism for his precious roulette wheel.

Everest accompanied her to the little post office. They walked arm in arm through the village like an affianced couple, and I fancy he must have said tenderer things than usual on the way, for at this stage of the story she wept.

When she paid the louis on the slab below the *guichet*, she noticed that it was a new Spanish coin. Spanish gold is rare. She showed it to Everest, and, meeting his eyes, read in them a curious questioning. The money-order obtained, they continued their walk happily, and Viviette forgot the incident.

Some days passed. Everest grew troubled and preoccupied. One live-long day he avoided her society altogether. She lived through it in a distressed wonder, and cried

herself to sleep that night. How had she offended ?

The next morning he gravely announced his departure. Urgent affairs summoned him to Paris. In dazed misery she accepted the payment of his account and wrote him a receipt. His face was set like a mask, and he looked at her out of cold, stern eyes which frightened her. In a timid way she asked him if he were going without one kind word.

" There are times, Miss Widdrington," said he, " when no word at all is the kindest."

" But what have I done ? " she cried.

" Nothing at all but what is good and right. You may think whatever you like of me. Good-bye."

He grasped his Gladstone bag, and through the window she saw him give it to the fisher lad who was to carry it three miles to the nearest wayside station. He disappeared through the gate, and so out of her life.

Fat, slatternly Jeanne came upon her a few moments later moaning her heart out, and administered comfort. It was very hard for mademoiselle, but what could mademoiselle expect ? Monsieur Everest could not stay any longer in the house. Naturally. Of course monsieur was a little touched in the brain, with his eternal calculations—he was not responsible for his actions. Still Monsieur Everest did not like monsieur to take money out of his room. But, Great God of Pity ! Did not mademoiselle know that was the reason of Monsieur Everest going away ?

" It was father who had stolen the Spanish louis," cried Viviette in a passion of tears, as we leaned once more against the parapet of the jetty. " He stole a fifty-franc note. He was caught red-handed by Mr. Everest rifling his dispatch box. Jeanne overheard them talking. It is horrible, horrible ! How he must despise me ! I feel wrapped in flames when I think of it—and I love him so—and I haven't slept for a week—and my heart is broken ! "

I could do little to soothe this paroxysm save let it spend itself against my great coat while I again put my arm around her. The grey tide was leaping in and the fine spray dashed in my face. The early twilight began to settle over Ravetot.

" Never mind, my dear," said I. " You are young, and as your soul is sweet and clean you will get over this."

" Never," she moaned.

" You will leave Ravetot-sur-Mer and all its associations, and the brightness of life will drive all the old shadows away ! "

" No. It is impossible. My heart is broken, and I only want to stay here at the end of the jetty until I die ! "

" I shall die, anyhow," I remarked, with a shiver, " if I stay here much longer, and I don't want to. Let us go home."

She assented, and we walked away from the sea and struck the gloomy inland road. Then I said, somewhat meaningly :

" Haven't you the curiosity to inquire why I left my comfortable house in London to come to this God-forsaken hole ? "

" Why did you, doctor, dear ? " she asked listlessly.

" To inform you that your cross old Aunt Caroline is dead, that she has left you three thousand pounds a year under my trusteeship till you are five and twenty, and that I am going to carry off the rich and beautiful Miss Viviette Widdrington to England to-morrow."

She stood still, looking at me open-mouthed.

" Is it true ? " she gasped.

" Of course," said I.

Her face was transfigured with a sudden radiance. Amazement, rapture, youth—the pulsating wonder of her twenty years—danced in her eyes. In her excitement she pulled me by the lapels of my coat.

" Doctor ! *Doctor !* Three thousand pounds a year ! England ! London ! Men and women ! Everything I've longed for ! All the glad and beautiful things of life ! "

" Yes, my dear."

She took my hands and swung them backward and forward.

" It's heaven ! Delicious heaven ! " she cried.

" But what about the broken heart ? " I said maliciously.

She dropped my hands, sighed, and her face suddenly assumed an expression of portentous misery.

" I was forgetting. What does anything matter now ? I shall never get over it. My heart *is* broken ! "

" The devil a bit, my dear," said I.

The Spinster

How a gallant old woman saved a critical situation

By ROBERT HICHENS

I HAD arrived at Inley Abbey that afternoon, and was sitting at dinner with Inley and his pretty wife, whom I had not seen for five years, since the day I was his best man, when we all heard faintly the tolling of a church bell. Lady Inley shook her shoulders in a rather exaggerated shudder.

"Someone dead!" said her husband.

"It's a mistake to build a church in the grounds of a house," Lady Inley said in her clear, drawling soprano voice. "That noise gives me the blues."

"Whom can it be for?" asked Inley.

"Miss Bassett, probably," Lady Inley replied carelessly, helping herself to a bon-bon from a little silver dish.

Inley started.

"Miss Sarah Bassett! What makes you think so?"

"Oh, while you were away in town she got ill. Didn't you know?"

"No," said Inley.

I could see that he was moved. His dark, short face had changed suddenly, and he stopped eating his fruit. Lady Inley went on crunching the bon-bon between her little white teeth with all the enjoyment of a pretty marmoset.

"Influenza," she said airily. "And then pneumonia. Of course, at her age, you know—— By the way, what is her age, Nino?"

"No idea," said Inley shortly.

He was listening to the dim and monotonous sound of the church bell.

Lady Inley turned to me with the childish, confidential movement which men considered one of her many charms.

"Miss Bassett is, or was, one of those funny old spinsters who always look the same and always ridiculous. Dry twigs, you know. One size all the way down. Very little hair, and no emotions. If it weren't for the sake of cats, one would wonder why such people are born. But they're always cat-lovers. I suppose that's why they're so often called old cats."

She uttered a little high-pitched laugh, and got up.

"Don't be too long," she said to me carelessly as I opened the dining-room door for her. "I want to sing 'Ohé Charmette' to you."

"I won't be long," I answered, thinking what exquisite eyes she had.

She turned, and went out in her delicious, thin way. No wonder she had made skeletons the rage in London. When I came back to the dinner-table Inley was sitting with both his brown hands clenched on the cloth.

His black eyes—inherited from his dead mother, who had been one of the Neapolitan aristocracy—were glittering.

"What is it, Nino?" I asked as I sat down.

We had been such intimate friends that even my five years' absence abroad had not built up a barrier between us.

"I wonder if it is Miss Bassett?" he said, looking at me earnestly.

"But was she a great friend of yours?" I said. "If Lady Inley's description of her is accurate, I can hardly imagine so."

"Vere doesn't know what she's saying."

"Then Miss Bassett——"

"Oh, she does look like that—dried up, unemotional, tame, English, even comic."

"The regular spinster, eh?"

"She looks it. But, damn it all, Vere has no business to say she had no emotions, to wonder why such people are born. But she doesn't know—Vere doesn't know."

His agitation grew, and was inexplicable to me. But I knew Inley, knew that he was bound to tell me what was on his mind. He could be reserved, but not with me. So I took a cigar, cut the end off it deliberately, struck a match, lighted it, and began to smoke in silence. He followed my example quickly, and then said:

"Vere talks like that, and, but for Miss

Bassett, Vere would have been murdered two years ago."

I started, and dropped my cigar on the table.

"Murdered!"

"Yes; and I——"

He fixed his eyes on me, and put his hand up to his throat. Nino was half Neapolitan, and I saw a man being hanged. I picked up my cigar with a hand that slightly shook.

"But," I said, "I always thought Lady Inley and you were very happy together."

It sounded banal, even ridiculous, but I hardly knew what to say. I was startled. The tolling of the bell, too, was getting on my nerves.

"One doesn't write such things," he said. "You've been abroad for years."

"It's all right now?"

He nodded.

"I suppose so. Vere has never had the least suspicion."

He drew his chair closer to mine, and was about to go on speaking when the servants came in with coffee.

"Who's the bell tolling for, Hurst?" he said to the butler.

"I couldn't say, my lord."

When the servants had gone Inley continued, at first in a calmer voice:

"Miss Bassett lived in the red cottage just beyond the gate of the South Lodge from time immemorial. You generally came to us in Scotland, I know, but I should think you must have seen her."

Suddenly a recollection flashed upon me—a recollection of a long, flat figure, a drab face, thin hair coming away from a wrinkled forehead under a mushroom hat, flapping, old-fashioned golden ear-rings.

"Not the person I used to call 'the Flank'?" I said.

"Did you?"

He thought for a moment.

"Yes; I believe you did. I'd forgotten."

"She was always in church twenty minutes before the service began, and always dropped her hymn-book coming out if there were visitors in the Abbey pew!"

"Yes, yes; that's it. Miss Bassett is very nervous in little ways."

"I remember her now perfectly. And you say she——"

I looked at him, and hesitated.

"She saved Vere's life and, indirectly, mine. I'll tell you now we're together again at last. I shall never tell Vere."

He looked towards the windows, across which dark blue silk curtains were drawn, as if he could see the passing-bell swinging in the old square tower. Then he turned to me.

"You know how mad I was about Vere. It's always like that with me. Unless I'm stone I'm fire. After we were married I got even madder. Having her all to myself was like enchantment, and in Italy, too, my other native land."

I thought of Lady Inley's eyes.

"I can understand," I said.

"Of course, when we got back it had to be different. Friends came in, and she was run after and admired and written about. You know the publicity of life in modern London."

"City of public-houses and society spies."

"I bore it, because it's supposed to be the thing. And Vere rather likes it, somehow. So I let her have her fun, as long as it was fun. I didn't intend it should ever be anything else."

He frowned. When he did that, and his thick eyebrows nearly met, he looked all Italian.

"We did the usual things—Paris, Ascot, Scotland, and so on—till Vere had to lie up."

"Your boy?"

"Yes; Hugo came along. I was glad when that was over. I thought she was going to die. You knew Seymour Glynd?"

"Life Guards? Killed hunting a year ago?"

Inley nodded.

"He was a great deal with us soon after Hugo's birth. I thought nothing of it. I'd known the fellow all my life. But then one nearly always has."

He laughed bitterly.

"To cut that part short, two years ago in autumn we had Glynd staying with us down here for shooting. There were some others, of course—Mrs. Jack, Bobbie Elphinton, and Lady Bobbie—but you know the lot."

"I did."

"Ah," he said, "you've been well out of it these years. Well, the shoot was to break up on a Friday, and I'd arranged to go to town that day with the rest. Vere didn't intend to come. She said she was feeling tired, and was going to have a Friday to Monday rest cure. That's the thing, you know, nowadays. You get a Swedish masseuse down to stay, and go to bed, and

drink milk. Vere had engaged a masseuse to come on the Friday night. On the Thursday, the day before we were all going to town, Glynd hurt his foot getting over a fence into a turnip field—at least I thought so."

He stopped.

"Everyone thought so, I believe—except, of course, Vere. I wonder if they did, though?" he added moodily. "Or whether I was the only—— But what does it matter now? Glynd said he only wanted a couple of days' rest to be all right again, and asked me if he might stay on at the Abbey till the Monday. Of course I said 'Yes,' if he wouldn't want a hostess. Because Vere said to me, when she heard of it, that she must have her rest cure all the same. Glynd swore he'd be quite happy alone. So he stayed, and the rest of us came up to town on the Friday. Well, on the Saturday morning I was walking across the park when I met the Swedish masseuse who was to have gone down to Vere on the Friday night. I knew her, because Vere had often had her before in London. 'Hallo!' I said. 'You ought to be down at Inley Abbey with my wife.' 'No, my lord,' she said. 'Why not?' 'I've had a wire from Lady Inley not to go.' 'A wire!' I said. 'When did you get it?' 'On Thursday night, my lord.' 'You mean last night?' I said, thinking Vere must have changed her mind after we had left. 'No,' said the woman; 'on Thursday night, late.' Then I remembered that, after Glynd had hurt his foot and asked to stay, Vere had gone out alone for a drive in her cart, to get a last breath of air before the rest cure. She must have sent the telegram herself then. All of a sudden I seemed to understand a lot of things."

He had let his cigar out, and now he noticed that he had. He tossed it into the fire.

"I said 'Good morning' to the woman quite quietly, went back to the house, and told my man I shouldn't be at home that night."

He put his hand on my arm.

"I felt perfectly calm. Wasn't that strange?"

I nodded.

"There was a train from town reaching Ashdridge Station at nine o'clock at night. I took it. I didn't care to go to Inley Station, where everybody would know me, and wonder what I was up to. I didn't take any luggage. My man asked if he should pack, and I said 'No.' I didn't dine. I was at Paddington three quarters of an hour before the train was due to start. At last it came in to the platform. Going down I read the evening papers just like any man going home from business. Soon after we got away from London I saw there was rain on the carriage windows. That seemed to me right. We were a little late at Ashdridge. It was still wet, and I had my coat-collar turned up. I don't believe they recognized me there. I set out to walk to Inley."

"What did you mean to do?"

"I told you before."

I looked into his face and believed him. Then I thought of Lady Inley's childish, delicate beauty, of her slightly affected manner, the manner of a woman who has always been spoilt, whose paths have been made very smooth. And here she was living, apparently happily, with a man who had deliberately travelled down in the night to kill her. How ignorant we are!

"You are condemning me," Inley said, with a touch of hot anger.

"I was only thinking——"

"Yes?"

"That we don't know each other much in the greatest intimacy."

"That's what I thought then."

He said that in a way which suddenly put me on his side. He must have seen the change in my feelings, for he went on, with his former unreserve:

"I walked fast in the dark. I didn't think very much, but I remember that all the trees—there's a lot of woodland, you know, between Ashdridge and Inley—seemed alive. Everything seemed to me to be alive that night. I've never had that sensation before or since."

I realized what the condition of the man had been when he said that, as if I were a doctor and a patient had told me the symptom which put me in possession of his malady.

"When I reached Inley it was late and the long village street was deserted. There were lights in the inn and in the schoolmaster's house, but there were no people about. I got through without meeting a soul, and came on towards the gates of the Abbey."

"You meant to go into the house?"

"Yes. I was sure—somehow I was sure;

but I intended to see before I acted, merely for my own justification. But I was quite sure, as if Vere herself had told me everything. Soon after I had got clear of the village I heard a sound of wheels behind me. I stood up against the hedge, and in a minute or two a fly passed me going slowly. I saw the driver's face. It wasn't a man from Inley. Evidently the fly had come from a distance. It was splashed with mud, and the horse looked tired. I followed it till it came to the turning just below Miss Bassett's cottage, where there's a narrow lane going to Charfield through the woods. It went a little way down this lane, and stopped. I waited at the turning. I could see the light from the lamps shining on the wet road, and in the circle of light the driver's breath. He bent down, and I saw him looking at a big silver watch. Then he put it back. But he didn't drive on. I knew what he was waiting for. Vere was going with—with Glynd. That was more than I had ever thought of, that she would go. I put my hand into my pocket, took out my revolver, and went on till I was close to the red cottage. By this time the rain had stopped. I came up to within a few yards of the Abbey gates, stood for a moment, and then returned till I was at the wicket of Miss Bassett's garden. It's bounded by a yew hedge, beyond which there is a path shaded by mulberry-trees.

The hedge is low, the path dark. It was a blackguardly thing to do, but I thought of nothing except myself, my wrong, and how I was to wipe it out. I opened the wicket, came into the path, and stood there under the mulberry-trees behind the hedge. Here I was in cover and could see the road. I held my revolver in my hand, and waited. It never struck me that Miss Bassett might be up. I saw no light in the cottage, and I had a sort of idea that people like her went to bed at about eight. While I was standing there listening I felt something rub against my legs. It made me start. Then I heard a little low noise. I looked down, and there was a great cat holding up its tail and purring. Its pleasure was horrible to me. I pushed it away with my foot, but it came back, bending down its head, arching its back, and pressing against me. I was thinking what to do to get rid of it when I heard a shrill, husky voice call out:

"'Johnny—John-nee!'

"It was Miss Bassett. I held my breath, and pushed away the cat.

"'Johnny, Johnny—John-nee!' went the voice again.

"The cat wouldn't leave me. God knows why it wished to stay. I was determined to get rid of it, so I put the revolver down on the path, picked the cat up in my arms, and dropped it over the hedge into the road. Just as I had caught up the revolver again I was confronted by Miss Bassett. She had come in slippers up the path in the dark to look for her cat."

I uttered a slight exclamation.

Inley went on: "She had a handkerchief tied over her cap and under her chin, and a small lantern in her hands, on which she wore black mittens. I can see her now. We stood there on the path for a minute staring at each other without a word. The light from the lantern flickered over the revolver, and I saw Miss Bassett look down at it."

He stopped, poured out a glass of water, and drank it off like a man who has been running.

"Didn't she show surprise—fear?" I asked.

"Not a bit. Women are so extraordinary, even old women who've never been in touch with life, that I'm certain now she understood directly her eyes fell on the revolver."

"What did she do?"

"After a minute she said: 'Lord Inley, I'm looking for my cat. Have you seen him?'

"'Yes,' I said; 'he's run into the house.'

"It was a lie, but I wanted her to go in. I had slipped the revolver back into my pocket, and tried to assume a perfectly simple, natural air. I fancied it would be very easy to impose on Miss Bassett when I heard her question. It sounded so innocent, as if the old lady was full of her pet. I even thought, perhaps, she had not known what the revolver was when she looked at it.

"'Did he run into the house?' she said, still looking at me from under her wrinkled eyelids.

"'Yes, when you came out. He was here on the path with me. You called "Johnny!" and he ran off there between the mulberry-trees.'

"All the time I was speaking to her I had an eye to the road, and my ears were listening like an Indian's when he puts his head to the ground to hear the pad of his enemy.

"Miss Bassett stood there quietly for a moment as if she were considering something. She looked prim. I remember that even now—prim as a caricature. It was only a moment, but it seemed to me an hour. 'If they should come,' I thought, 'while she is out here!' The sweat came out all over my face with impatience—an agony of impatience. I longed to take the old lady by the shoulders, push her into the cottage, lock her in, and be alone, able to watch the bit of road from the Abbey gates to the wicket. But I could do nothing. I was obliged to repress every sign of agitation. It was devilish."

He got up with a sudden jerk from his chair and stood by the fire. Even the telling of that moment had set beads of moisture on his square, low forehead.

"At last she spoke again.

"'I wonder if you'd mind coming in for a minute to help me see if Johnny really is in the house?' she said.

"I don't know what I should have done—refused, I believe, refused her with an oath, for I began to feel mad; but just at that instant up came the cat once more, purring like fury, and lifting up its tail. He made straight for me, and began to rub himself against my legs again.

"'Oh!' said Miss Bassett, 'there he is! Naughty Johnny, naughty boy! Lord Inley, perhaps, you'd be so good as just to lift him up and put him inside the door for me. I always have such a job to get him to come in of a night. He likes hunting in the woods. Doesn't he, the naughty Johnny?'

"'Now's my chance to get rid of her!' I thought.

"I bent down, picked the cat up, and went along the path towards the cottage, Miss Bassett following close behind me. The cat was an immense beast, awfully heavy, and just as I turned out of the yew path to go up to the cottage door he began struggling to get away, and scratching. I held on to him, but it wasn't easy, and I got my hand torn before I dropped him down inside the little hall. Away he ran, towards the kitchen, I suppose. Miss Bassett was very grateful, but I cut her gratitude short.

"'Very glad to have been able to help you,' I said. 'Good night.'

"'Good night, Lord Inley,' she said.

"I thought her voice sounded a little bit odd when she said that, and I just glanced at her funny old face, lit up by the lantern she was holding in one mittened hand. She didn't look at me this time as she had in the garden. Then I went out, and she immediately shut the door."

"'Thank God!' I thought, and I hurried to the wicket. I didn't dare stay in the garden now. Seeing her had made me realize my blackguardism in coming in at all, considering my reason. I resolved to hide in the field at the corner where the road turns off to Charfield. As I opened the wicket, instinctively I put my hand into my pocket for my revolver."

He bent down, looking full into my eyes.

"It wasn't there."

"Miss Bassett!" I exclaimed.

"In a moment I realized that Miss Bassett must have grasped the situation; that her asking me to carry in her cat was a ruse, and that while the beast was struggling between my hands she must have stolen the revolver from behind. I say I knew that, and yet even then, when I thought of her look, her manner, the sort of nervous old thing she was, I couldn't believe what I knew. Then I remembered her voice when she said 'Good night' to me in the passage, her eyes looking down instead of at me, and that she was only holding the lantern in one hand, whereas in the garden she was using two. She must have had the revolver in her other hand concealed in the folds of her dress. I ran back to the cottage door and knocked—hard. Not that I thought she'd open. I knew she wouldn't, but she did directly. I could hardly speak. I was afraid of myself just then. At last I said:

"'Miss Bassett, you know what I want.'

"'You can't have it,' she said, looking straight at me.

"I kept quiet for a second, then I said:

"'Miss Bassett, I don't think you know that you're running into danger.' For I felt that there was danger for her then if she went against me. She knew it, too, perhaps better than I did. I saw her poor old hands, all blue veins, beginning to tremble.

"'You can't have it, Lord Inley,' she repeated.

"There wasn't the ghost of a quiver in her voice.

"'I must, I will!' I said, and I made a movement towards her—a violent movement I know it was.

"But the old thing stood her ground. Oh, she was a gallant old woman.

"'Do what you like to me,' she said. 'I'm old. What does it matter? She's young.'

"Then I knew she understood.

"'You've seen them together!' I said. 'Since I went!'

"She wouldn't say. Not a word. I was mad. I forgot decency, everything. I took her. I searched her for the revolver. I searched her roughly—God forgive me! She trembled horribly, but never said a word. It wasn't on her. She must have hidden it somewhere in that moment when she was alone in the cottage. That was another ruse to keep me searching in there while—— But I saw it almost directly. I broke away, and rushed out and down the road. Something seemed to tell me they had passed. I got into the lane that leads to Charfield. The fly was gone. Then, all of a sudden, I felt perfectly calm. I turned, and went up to the Abbey gates. I knocked them up at the lodge. The keeper came out. When he saw me he said:

"'You, my lord! However did you know?'

"'Go on!' I said. 'Know what?'

"'About Master Hugo?'

"I didn't say one way or the other.

"'The doctor says it's a bitter bad quinsy, but there's just a chance. Her ladyship's nearly mad. It only came on a few hours ago quite sudden.'

"I went up to the Abbey, and found Vere by the child's bed. She looked flushed, and was breathing hard, as if she had just been running."

He stopped, and took out his cigar-case.

"Running!" I said.

"She had parted finally from Glynd in front of Miss Bassett's cottage," he said. "He told me that afterwards."

There was a moment's silence. Then he spoke more calmly.

"I went up to town when the child was safe, and had it out with Glynd. They had meant to go that night. It was the boy who stopped her. She took it as a judgment. You know how women are. Glynd swore she was stopped in time. You understand?"

"Yes."

"He didn't lie to me."

"And your wife?"

"I never spoke of it to her. I saw her with the boy, and—well, I saw her with the boy, and what she was to him when he was close to death."

His voice went for a moment. Then he added:

"I told her I'd had a presentiment Hugo was ill. She believed me, I think. If not, she's kept her secret."

Just then the dining-room door opened, and Lady Inley put in her pretty head.

"Are you never coming?" she said with her little childish drawl.

I got up, and went towards her.

"By the way, Nino," she added, "the bell was for poor, funny old Miss Bassett. What will her cat do, I wonder?"

As I followed her towards the drawing-room I heard Inley's voice mutter behind me:

"*Requiescat in Pace.*"

Mr. Sam Weller on the Old 'un

"MY father, sir, vos a coachman. A vidower he vos, and fat enough for anything—uncommon fat, to be sure! His missus dies, and leaves him four hundred pounds. Down he goes to the Commons, to see the lawyer and draw the blunt—very smart, top boots on, nosegay in his buttonhole, broad-brimmed tile, green shawl—quite the gen'l'm'n. Goes through the archway, thinking how he should inwest the money; up comes the touter, touches his hat—'License, sir, license?'—

"'What's that?' says my father. 'License, sir,' says he. 'What license?' says my father, 'I never thought of that.' 'I think you wants one, sir,' says the touter. My father pulls himself up and thinks a bit. 'No,' says he, 'damme, I'm too old; b'sides, I'm a many sizes too large,' says he. 'Not a bit on it, sir,' says the touter. 'Think not?' says my father. 'I'm sure not,' says he. 'We married a gen'l'm'n twice your size last Monday.'"

The Lost Blend

A strange recipe and its effect upon a tongue-tied lover

By O. HENRY

O. Henry hardly needs an introduction. He stands alone, with that cryptic and fascinating style which was peculiar to his genius. He found humour, pathos and tragedy in the oddest corners, made great stories of the slightest incidents, and had an almost uncanny power of observing clearly what other people missed.

SINCE the bar has been blessed by the clergy, and cocktails open the dinners of the elect, one may speak of the saloon. Teetotallers need not listen, if they choose; there is always the slot restaurant, where a dime dropped into the cold bouillon aperture will bring forth a dry Martini.

Con Lantry worked on the sober side of the bar in Kenealy's café. You and I stood, one-legged like geese, on the other side and went into voluntary liquidation with our week's wages. Opposite danced Con, clean, temperate, clear-headed, polite, white-jacketed, punctual, trustworthy, young, responsible, and took our money.

The saloon (whether blessed or cursed) stood in one of those little "places" which are parallelograms instead of streets, and inhabited by laundries, decayed Knickerbocker families and Bohemians who have nothing to do with either.

Over the café lived Kenealy and his family. His daughter Katherine had eyes of dark Irish—but why should you be told? Be content with your Geraldine or your Eliza Ann. For Con dreamed of her; and when she called softly at the foot of the back stairs for the pitcher of beer for dinner, his heart went up and down like a milk punch in the shaker. Orderly and fit are the rules of Romance; and if you hurl the last shilling of your fortune upon the bar for whisky, the bar-tender shall take it, and marry his boss's daughter, and good will grow out of it.

But not so Con. For in the presence of woman he was tongue-tied and scarlet. He who would quell with his eye the sonorous youth whom the claret punch made loquacious, or smash with lemon squeezer the obstreperous, or hurl gutterward the cantankerous without a wrinkle coming to his white lawn tie, when he stood before woman he was voiceless, incoherent, stuttering, buried beneath a hot avalanche of bashfulness and misery. What, then, was he before Katherine? A trembler, with no word to say for himself, a stone without blarney, the dumbest lover that ever babbled of the weather in the presence of his divinity.

There came to Kenealy's two sunburned men, Riley and McQuirk. They had conference with Kenealy; and then they took possession of a back room, which they filled with bottles and siphons and jugs and druggists' measuring glasses. All the appurtenances and liquids of a saloon were there, but they dispensed no drinks. All day long the two sweltered in there, pouring and mixing unknown brews and decoctions from the liquors in their store. Riley had the education, and he figured on reams of paper, reducing gallons to ounces and quarts to fluid drams. McQuirk, a morose man with a red eye, dashed each unsuccessful completed mixture into the waste pipes with curses gentle, husky and deep. They laboured heavily and untiringly to achieve some mysterious solution like two alchemists striking to resolve gold from the elements.

Into this back room one evening, when his watch was done, sauntered Con. His professional curiosity had been stirred by these occult bar-tenders at whose bar none drank, and who daily drew upon Kenealy's store of liquors to follow their consuming and fruitless experiments.

Down the back stairs came Katherine, with her smile like sunrise on Gweebarra Bay.

"Good evening, Mr. Lantry," says she. "And what is the news to-day, if you please?"

"It looks like r-rain," stammered the shy one, backing to the wall.

"It couldn't do better," said Katherine. "I'm thinking there's nothing the worse off for a little water."

In the back room Riley and McQuirk toiled like bearded witches over their strange compounds. From fifty bottles they drew liquids carefully measured after Riley's figures, and shook the whole together in a great glass vessel. Then McQuirk would dash it out, with gloomy profanity, and they would begin again.

"Sit down," said Riley to Con, "and I'll tell you."

"Last summer me and Tim concludes that an American bar in this nation of Nicaragua would pay. There was a town on the coast where there's nothing to eat but quinine and nothing to drink but rum. The natives and foreigners lay down with chills and get up with fevers; and a good mixed drink is nature's remedy for all such tropical inconveniences.

"So we lays in a fine stock of wet goods in New York, and bar fixtures and glassware, and we sails for that Santa Palma town on a line steamer. On the way me and Tim sees flying fish and plays seven-up with the captain and steward, and already begins to feel like the high-ball kings of the tropic of Capricorn.

"When we gets in five hours of the country that we was going to introduce to long drinks and short change, the captain calls us over to the starboard binnacle and recollects a few things.

"'I forgot to tell you, boys,' says he, 'that Nicaragua slapped an import duty of 48 per cent. *ad valorem* on all bottled goods last month. The President took a bottle of Cincinnati hair tonic by mistake for tabasco sauce, and he's getting even. Barrelled goods is free.'

"'Sorry you didn't mention it sooner,' says we. And we bought two forty-two gallon casks from the captain, and opened every bottle we had and dumped the stuff all together in the casks. That 48 per cent. would have ruined us; so we took the chances on making that $1,200 cocktail rather than throw the stuff away.

"Well, when we landed we tapped one of the barrels. The mixture was something heartrending. It was the colour of a plate of Bowery pea-soup, and it tasted like one of those coffee substitutes your aunt makes you take for the heart trouble you get by picking losers. We gave a nigger four fingers of it to try it, and he lay under a coconut tree three days beating the sand with his heels, and refused to sign a testimonial.

"But the other barrel! Say, bar-tender, did you ever put on a straw hat with a yellow band around it, and go up in a balloon with a pretty girl, with $8,000,000 in your pocket all at the same time? That's what thirty drops of it would make you feel like. With two fingers of it inside you, you would bury your face in your hands and cry because there wasn't anything worth while around for you to lick than little Jim Jeffries. Yes, sir, the stuff in that second barrel was distilled elixir of battle, money and high life. It was the colour of gold and as clear as glass, and it shone after dark like the sunshine was still in it. A thousand years from now you'll get a drink like that across the bar.

"Well, we started up business with that one line of drinks, and it was enough. The piebald gentry of that country stuck to it like a hive of bees. If that barrel had lasted that country would have become the greatest on earth. When we opened up of mornings we had a line of generals and colonels and ex-presidents and revolutionists a block long waiting to be served. We started in at 50 cents. silver drink. The last ten gallons went easy at $5 a gulp. It was wonderful stuff. It gave a man courage and ambition and nerve to do anything; at the same time he didn't care whether his money was tainted or fresh from the Ice Trust. When that barrel was half gone Nicaragua had repudiated the National Debt, removed the duty on cigarettes, and was about to declare war on the United States and England.

"'Twas by accident we discovered this king of drinks, and 'twill be by good luck if we strike it again. For ten months we've been trying. Small lots at a time, we've mixed barrels of all the harmful ingredients known to the profession of drinking. Ye could have stocked ten bars with the whiskies, brandies, cordials, bitters, gins and wines me and Tim have wasted. A glorious drink like that to be denied to the world! 'Tis a sorrow and a loss of money. The United States as a nation would welcome a drink of the sort, and pay for it."

All the while McQuirk had been carefully measuring and pouring small quantities of various spirits, as Riley called them, from his latest pencilled prescription. The com-

pleted mixture was of a vile, mottled chocolate. McQuirk tasted it, and hurled it, with appropriate epithets, into the waste sink.

" 'Tis a strange story, even if true," said Con. " I'll be going now, along to my supper."

" Take a drink," said Riley. " We've all kinds except the lost blend."

" I never drink," said Con, " anything stronger than water. I am just after meeting Miss Katherine by the stairs. She said a true word. ' There's not anything,' says she, ' but is better off for a little water.' "

When Con had left them, Riley almost felled McQuirk by a blow on the back.

" Did you hear that ? " he shouted. " Two fools are we. The six dozen bottles of 'pollinaris we had on the ship—ye opened them yourself—which barrel did ye pour them in—which barrel, ye mudhead ? "

" I mind," said McQuirk, slowly, " 'twas in the second barrel we opened. I mind the blue piece of paper pasted on the side of it."

" We've got it now," cried Riley. " 'Twas that we lacked. 'Tis water that does the trick. Everything else we had right. Hurry, man, and get two bottles of 'pollinaris from the bar, while I figure out the proportionments with me pencil."

An hour later Con strolled down the sidewalk towards Kenealy's café. Thus faithful employees haunt, during their recreation hours, the vicinity where they labour, drawn by some mysterious attraction.

A police patrol wagon stood at the side door. Three able cops were half carrying, half hustling Riley and McQuirk up its rear steps. The eyes and faces of each bore bruises and cuts of sanguinary and assiduous conflict. Yet they whooped with strange joy, and directed upon the police the feeble remnants of their pugnacious madness.

" Began fighting each other in the back room," explained Kenealy to Con. " And singing ! That was worse. Smashed everything pretty much up. But they're good men. They'll pay for everything. Trying to invent some new kind of cocktail, they was. I'll see they come out all right in the morning."

Con sauntered into the back room to view the battlefield. As he went through the hall, Katherine was just coming down the stairs.

" Good evening again, Mr. Lantry," said she. " And is there no news from the weather yet ? "

" Still threatens r-rain," said Con, slipping past with red in his smooth, pale cheek.

Riley and McQuirk had, indeed, waged a great and friendly battle. Broken bottles and glasses were everywhere. The room was full of alcohol fumes ; the floor was variegated with spirituous puddles.

On the table stood a 32-ounce glass graduated measure. In the bottom of it were two tablespoonfuls of liquid—a bright golden liquid that seemed to hold the sunshine a prisoner in its auriferous depths.

Con smelled it. He tasted it. He drank it.

As he returned through the hall, Katherine was just going up the stairs.

" No news yet, Mr. Lantry ? " she asked, with her teasing laugh.

Con lifted her clear from the floor and held her there.

" The news is," he said, " that we're to be married."

" Put me down, sir ! " she cried indignantly, " or I will—Oh, Con, where, oh, wherever did you get the nerve to say it ? "

THIS is the comfort of friends, that though they may be said to die, yet their friendship and society are, in the best sense, ever present, because immortal.

—William Penn.

. . . the only real tragedy in life is the being used by personally minded men for purposes which you recognize to be base.

—Bernard Shaw in " Man and Superman."

SPEECH is the only benefit man hath to express his excellency of mind above other creatures.

—Ben Jonson.

DRACULA . By

The Weirdest and Most

FOREWORD: Of all the amazing tales that came from the pen of my late husband, "Dracula" has invariably been acknowledged as the most fascinating and enthralling. It is now being serialized for the first time, and even the early chapters are sufficient to justify the claim that the story has no equal in the realms of mystery and imagination.

It has been described as "the weirdest of weird tales," more powerful and more appalling than "Wüthering Heights," "Franken-

CHAPTER I

JONATHAN HARKER'S JOURNAL

(Kept in shorthand)

MAY 3. Bistritz.—Left Munich at 8.35 P.M. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning; should have arrived at 6.46, but train was an hour late. Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place, from the glimpse which I got of it from the train and the little I could walk through the streets. I feared to go very far from the station, as we had arrived late and would start as near the correct time as possible. The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East; the most Western of the splendid bridges over the Danube, which is here of noble width and depth, took us among the traditions of Turkish rule.

We left in pretty good time, and came after nightfall to Klausenburgh. Here I stopped for the night at the Hotel Royale. I had for dinner, or rather supper, a chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good but thirsty. (*Mem.*, get recipe for Mina.) I asked the waiter, and he said it was called "paprika hendl," and that, as it was a national dish, I should be able to get it anywhere along the Carpathians. I found my smattering of German very useful here; indeed, I don't know how I should be able to get on without it.

Having some time at my disposal when in London, I had visited the British Museum, and made search among the books and maps in the library regarding Transylvania; it had struck me that some foreknowledge of the country could hardly fail to have some importance in dealing with a noble of that country. I find that the district he named is in the extreme east of the country, just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bukovina, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe. I was not able to light on any map or work giving the exact locality of the Castle Dracula, as there are no maps of this country as yet to compare with our own ordnance survey maps; but I found that Bistritz, the post town named by Count Dracula, is a fairly well-known place. I shall enter here some of my notes, as they may refresh my memory when I talk over my travels with Mina.

In the population of Transylvania there are four distinct nationalities: Saxons in the south, and mixed with them the Wallachs, who are the descendants of the Dacians; Magyars in the west, and Szekelys in the east and north. I am going among the latter, who claim to be descended from Attila and the Huns. This may be so, for when the Magyars conquered the country in the eleventh century they found the Huns settled in it. I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horse-shoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool; if so my stay may be very interesting. (*Mem.*, I must ask the Count all about them.)

I did not sleep well, though my bed was comfortable enough, for I had all sorts of queer dreams. There was a dog howling all night under my window, which may have had something to do with it; or it may have been the paprika, for I had to drink up all the water in my carafe, and was still thirsty. Towards morning I slept and was wakened by the continuous knocking at my door, so I guess I must have been sleeping soundly then. I had for breakfast more paprika, and a sort of porridge of maize flour which they said was "mamaliga," and egg-plant stuffed with forcemeat, a very excellent dish, which they call "impletata." (*Mem.*, get recipe for this also.) I had to hurry breakfast, for the train started a little before eight, or rather it ought to have done so, for after rushing to the station at 7.30 I had to sit in the carriage for more than an hour before we began to move. It seems to me that the farther East you go the more unpunctual are the trains. What ought they to be in China?

All day long we seemed to dawdle through a country which was full of beauty of every kind. Sometimes we saw little towns or castles on the top of steep hills such as we see in old missals; sometimes we ran by rivers and streams which seemed from the wide stony margin on each side of them to be subject to great floods. It takes a lot of water, and running strong, to sweep the outside edge of a river clear. At every station there were groups of people, sometimes crowds, and in all sorts of attire. Some of

BRAM STOKER

Powerful Story ever written

stein," or "The Fall of the House of Usher," and I think that such judgments are not inadequate. My late husband used to read his stories over to me as they were written, and "Dracula" was by no means least among those which revealed to me the supernormal imagination of the author. Because this astonishing work will undoubtedly please and thrill a new generation of readers I have willingly given my permission to the Editor to republish it in serial form.

(*Mrs.*) *F. A. L. BRAM STOKER.*

them were just like the peasants at home or those I saw coming through France and Germany, with short jackets and round hats and home-made trousers; but others were very picturesque. The women looked pretty, except when you got near them, but they were very clumsy about the waist. They had all full white sleeves of some kind or other, and most of them had big belts with a lot of strips of something fluttering from them like the dresses in a ballet, but of course petticoats under them. The strangest figures we saw were the Slovaks, who are more barbarian than the rest, with their big cowboy hats, great baggy dirty-white trousers, white linen shirts, and enormous heavy leather belts, nearly a foot wide, all studded over with brass nails. They wore high boots, with their trousers tucked into them, and had long black hair and heavy black moustaches. They are very picturesque, but do not look prepossessing. On the stage they would be set down at once as some old Oriental band of brigands. They are, however, I am told, very harmless and rather wanting in natural self-assertion.

It was on the dark side of twilight when we got to Bistritz, which is a very interesting old place. Being practically on the frontier—for the Borgo Pass leads from it into Bukovina—it has had a very stormy existence, and it certainly shows marks of it. Fifty years ago a series of great fires took place, which made terrible havoc on five separate occasions. At the very beginning of the seventeenth century it underwent a siege of three weeks and lost 13,000 people, the casualties of war proper being assisted by famine and disease.

Count Dracula had directed me to go to the Golden Krone Hotel which I found, to my great delight, to be thoroughly old-fashioned, for of course I wanted to see all I could of the ways of the country. I was evidently expected, for when I got near the door I faced a cheery-looking elderly woman in the usual peasant dress—white undergarment with long double apron, front and back, of coloured stuff, fitting almost too tight for modesty. When I came close she bowed, and said, "The Herr Englishman?" "Yes," I said, "Jonathan Harker." She smiled, and gave some message to an elderly man in white shirt-sleeves, who had followed her to the door. He went, but immediately returned with a letter:

"MY FRIEND,—Welcome to the Carpathians. I am anxiously expecting you. Sleep well to-night. At three to-morrow the diligence will start for Bukovina; a place on it is kept for you. At the Borgo Pass my carriage will await you and will bring you to me. I trust that your journey from London has been a happy one, and that you will enjoy your stay in my beautiful land.—Your friend,

"DRACULA."

MAY 4.—I found that my landlord had got a letter from the Count, directing him to secure the best place on the coach for me; but on making inquiries as to details he seemed somewhat reticent, and pretended that he could not understand my German. This could not be true, because up to then he had understood it perfectly; at least, he answered my questions exactly as if he did. He and his wife, the old lady who had received me, looked at each other in a frightened sort of way. He mumbled out that the money had been sent in a letter, and that was all he knew. When I asked him if he knew Count Dracula, and could tell me anything of his castle, both he and his wife crossed themselves, and, saying that they knew nothing at all, simply refused to speak further. It was so near the time of starting that I had no time to ask anyone else, for it was all very mysterious and not by any means comforting.

Just before I was leaving, the old lady came up to my room and said in a very hysterical way:

"Must you go? Oh! young Herr, must you go?" She was in such an excited state that she seemed to have lost her grip of what German she knew, and mixed it all up with some other language which I did not know at all. I was just able to follow her by asking many questions. When I told her that I must go at once, and that I was engaged on important business, she asked again:

"Do you know what day it is?" I answered that it was the fourth of May. She shook her head as she said again:

"Oh, yes! I know that, I know that! But do

you know what day it is?" On my saying that I did not understand, she went on:

"It is the eve of St. George's Day. Do you not know that to-night, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway? Do you know where you are going, and what you are going to?" She was in such evident distress that I tried to comfort her, but without effect. Finally she went down on her knees and implored me not to go; at least to wait a day or two before starting. It was all very ridiculous, but I did not feel comfortable. However, there was business to be done, and I could allow nothing to interfere with it. I therefore tried to raise her up, and said, as gravely as I could, that I thanked her, but my duty was imperative, and that I must go. She then rose and dried her eyes, and taking a crucifix from her neck offered it to me. I did not know what to do, for, as an English Churchman, I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous, and yet it seemed so ungracious to refuse an old lady meaning so well and in such a state of mind. She saw, I suppose, the doubt in my face, for she put the rosary round my neck, and said, "For your mother's sake," and went out of the room. I am writing up this part of the diary whilst I am waiting for the coach, which is, of course, late; and the crucifix is still round my neck. Whether it is the old lady's fear, or the many ghostly traditions of this place, or the crucifix itself, I do not know, but I am not feeling nearly as easy in my mind as usual. If this book should ever reach Mina before I do, let it bring my good-bye. Here comes the coach!

MAY 5. The Castle.—The grey of the morning has passed, and the sun is high over the distant horizon, which seems jagged, whether with trees or hills I know not, for it is so far off that big things and little are mixed. I am not sleepy, and, as I am not to be called till I awake, naturally I write till sleep comes. There are many odd things to put down, and, lest who reads them may fancy that I dined too well before I left Bistritz, let me put down my dinner exactly. I dined on what they call "robber steak"—bits of bacon, onion, and beef, seasoned with red pepper, and strung on sticks and roasted over the fire, in the simple style of the London cat's-meat! The wine was Golden Mediasch, which produces a queer sting on the tongue, which, is, however, not disagreeable. I had only a couple of glasses of this, and nothing else.

When I got on the coach the driver had not taken his seat, and I saw him talking with the landlady. They were evidently talking of me, for every now and then they looked at me, and some of the people who were sitting on the bench outside the door—which they call by a name meaning "word-bearer"—came and listened, and then looked at me, most of them pityingly. I could hear a lot of words often repeated, queer words, for there were many nationalities in the crowd; so I quietly got my polyglot dictionary from my bag and looked them out. I must say they were not cheering to me, for amongst them were "Ordog"—Satan, "pokol"—hell, "stregoica"—witch, "vrolok" and "vlkoslak"—both of which mean the same thing, one being Slovak and the other Servian for something that is either were-wolf or vampire. (*Mem.*, I must ask the Count about these superstitions.)

When we started, the crowd round the inn door, which had by this time swelled to a considerable size, all made the sign of the cross and pointed two fingers towards me. With some difficulty I got a fellow-passenger to tell me what they meant; he would not answer at first, but on learning that I was English he explained that it was a charm or guard against the evil eye. This was not very pleasant for me, just starting for an unknown place to meet an unknown man; but everyone seemed so kind-hearted, and so sorrowful, and so sympathetic that I could not but be touched. I shall never forget the last glimpse which I had of the inn-yard and its crowd of picturesque figures, all crossing themselves, as they stood round the wide archway, with its background of rich foliage of oleander and orange trees in green tubs clustered in the centre of the yard. Then our driver, whose wide linen drawers covered the whole front of the box-seat—"gotza" they call them—cracked his big whip over his four small horses, which ran abreast, and we set off on our journey.

I soon lost sight and recollection of ghostly fears in the beauty of the scene as we drove along, although had I known the language, or rather languages, which my fellow-passengers were speaking, I might not have been able to throw them off so easily. Before us lay a green sloping land full of forests and woods, with here and there steep hills, crowned with clumps of trees or with farmhouses, the blank gable end to the road. There was everywhere a bewildering mass of fruit blossom—apple, plum, pear, cherry; and as we drove by I could see the green grass under the trees spangled with the fallen petals. In and out among these green hills of what they call here the "Mittel Land" ran the road, losing itself as it swept round the grassy curve, or was shut out by the straggling ends of the pine woods, which here and there ran down the hillsides like tongues of flame. The road was rugged, but still we seemed to fly over it with a feverish haste. I could not understand then what the haste meant, but the driver was evidently bent on losing no time in reaching Borgo Prund. I was told that this road is in summer-time excellent, but that it had not yet been put in order after the winter snows. In this respect it is different from the general run of roads in the Carpathians, for it is an old tradition that they are not to be kept in too good order. Of old the Hospodars would not repair them, less the Turk should think that they were preparing to bring in foreign troops, and so hasten the war which was always really at loading point.

Beyond the green swelling hills of the Mittel Land rose mighty slopes of forest up to the lofty steeps of the Carpathians themselves. Right and left of us they towered, with the afternoon sun falling full upon them and bringing out all the glorious colours of this beautiful range, deep blue and purple in the shadows of the peaks, green and brown where grass and rock mingled, and an endless perspective of jagged rock and pointed crags, till

these were themselves lost in the distance, where the snowy peaks rose grandly. Here and there seemed mighty rifts in the mountains, through which, as the sun began to sink, we saw now and again the white gleam of falling water. One of my companions touched my arm as we swept round the base of a hill and opened up the lofty, snow-covered peak of a mountain, which seemed, as we wound on our serpentine way, to the right before us."

"Look! Isten szek!"—"God's seat!"—and he crossed himself reverently. As we wound on our endless way, and the sun sank lower and lower behind us, the shadows of the evening began to creep round us. This was emphasized by the fact that the snowy mountain-top still held the sunset, and seemed to glow out with a delicate cool pink. Here and there we passed Czechs and Slovaks, all in picturesque attire, but I noticed that goitre was painfully prevalent. By the roadside were many crosses, and as we swept by, my companions all crossed themselves. Here and there was a peasant man or woman kneeling before a shrine, who did not even turn round as we approached, but seemed in the self-surrender of devotion to have neither eyes nor ears for the outer world. There were many things new to me: for instance, hay-ricks in the trees, and here and there very beautiful masses of weeping birch, their white stems shining like silver through the delicate green of the leaves. Now and again we passed a leiter-wagon—the ordinary peasant's cart, with its long, snake-like vertebra, calculated to suit the inequalities of the road. On this were sure to be seated quite a group of home-coming peasants, the Czechs with their white, and the Slovaks with their coloured, sheepskins, the latter carrying lance-fashion their long staves, with axe at end.

As the evening fell it began to get very cold, and the growing twilight seemed to merge into one dark mistiness the gloom of the trees, oak, beech, and pine, though in the valleys which ran deep between the spurs of the hills, as we ascended through the Pass, the dark firs stood out here and there against the background of late-lying snow. Sometimes, as the road was cut through the pine woods that seemed in the darkness to be closing down upon us, great masses of greyness, which here and there bestrewed the trees, produced a peculiarly weird and solemn effect, which carried on the thoughts and grim fancies engendered earlier in the evening, when the falling sunset threw into strange relief the ghost-like clouds which amongst the Carpathians seem to wind ceaselessly through the valleys. Sometimes the hills were so steep that, despite our driver's haste, the horses could only go slowly. I wished to get down and walk up them, as we do at home, but the driver would not hear of it. "No, no," he said; "you must not walk here; the dogs are too fierce;" and then he added, with what he evidently meant for grim pleasantry—for he looked round to catch the approving smile of the rest—"and you may have enough of such matters before you go to sleep."

When it grew dark there seemed to be some excitement amongst the passengers, and they kept speaking to him, one after the other, as though urging him to further speed. He lashed the horses unmercifully with his long whip, and with wild cries of encouragement urged them on to further exertions. Then through the darkness I could see a sort of patch of grey light ahead of us, as though there were a cleft in the hills. The excitement of the passengers grew greater; the crazy coach rocked on its great leather springs, and swayed like a boat tossed on a stormy sea. I had to hold on. The road grew more level, and we appeared to fly along. Then the mountains seemed to come nearer to us on each side and to frown down upon us; we were entering on the Borgo Pass. One by one several of the passengers offered me gifts, which they pressed upon me with an earnestness which would take no denial; these were certainly of an odd and varied kind, but each was given in simple good faith, with a kindly word and a blessing, and that strange mixture of fear-meaning movements which I had seen outside the hotel at Bistritz—the sign of the cross and the guard against the evil eye. Then, as we flew along, the driver leaned forward, and on each side the passengers, craning over the edge of the coach, peered eagerly into the darkness. It was evident that something very exciting was either happening or expected, but though I asked each passenger, no one would give me the slightest explanation. This state of excitement kept on for some little time; and at last we saw before us the Pass opening out on the eastern side. There were dark clouds overhead, and in the air the heavy, oppressive sense of thunder. It seemed as though the mountain range had separated two atmospheres, and that now we had got into the thunderous one. I was now myself looking out for the conveyance which was to take me to the Count. Each moment I expected to see the glare of lamps through the blackness; but all was dark. The only light was the flickering rays of our own lamps, in which the steam from our hard-driven horses rose in a white cloud. We could now see the sandy road lying white before us, but there was on it no sign of a vehicle. The passengers drew back with a sigh of gladness, which seemed to mock my own disappointment. I was already thinking what I had best do, when the driver, looking at his watch, said to the others something which I could hardly hear, it was spoken so quietly and in so low a tone; I thought it was "An hour less than the time." Then turning to me, he said in German worse than my own:

"There is no carriage here. The Herr is not expected after all. He will now come on to Bukovina, and return to-morrow or the next day; better the next day." Whilst he was speaking the horses began to neigh and snort and plunge wildly, so that the driver had to hold them up. Then, amongst a chorus of screams from the peasants and a universal crossing of themselves, a calèche, with four horses, drove up behind us, overtook us, and drew up beside the coach. I could see from the flash of our lamps, as the rays fell on them, that the horses were coal-black and splendid animals. They were driven by a tall man, with a long brown beard and a great black hat, which seemed to hide his face from us. I could only see the gleam of a pair of very bright eyes, which

seemed red in the lamplight, as he turned to us. He said to the driver:

"You are early to-night, my friend." The man stammered in reply:

"The English Herr was in a hurry," to which the stranger replied:

"That is why, I suppose, you wished him to go on to Bukovina. You cannot deceive me, my friend; I know too much, and my horses are swift." As he spoke he smiled, and the lamplight fell on a hard-looking mouth, with very red lips and sharp-looking teeth, as white as ivory. One of my companions whispered to another the line from Burger's "Lenore":

"Denn die Todten reiten schnel' "—

("For the dead travel fast.")

The strange driver evidently heard the words, for he looked up with a gleaming smile. The passenger turned his face away, at the same time putting out his two fingers and crossing himself. "Give me the Herr's luggage," said the driver; and with exceeding alacrity my bags were handed out and put in the calèche. Then I descended from the side of the coach, as the calèche was close alongside, the driver helping me with a hand which caught my arm in a grip of steel; his strength must have been prodigious. Without a word he shook his reins, the horses turned, and we swept into the darkness of the Pass. As I looked back I saw the steam from the horses of the coach by the light of the lamps, and projected against it the figures of my late companions crossing themselves. Then the driver cracked his whip and called to his horses, and off they swept on their way to Bukovina.

¶

AS they sank into the darkness I felt a strange chill, and a lonely feeling came over me; but a cloak was thrown over my shoulders, and a rug across my knees, and the driver said in excellent German:

"The night is chill, mein Herr, and my master the Count bade me take all care of you. There is a flask of slivovitz [the plum brandy of the country] underneath the seat, if you should require it." I did not take any, but it was a comfort to know it was there all the same. I felt a little strangely, and not a little frightened. I think had there been any alternative I should have taken it, instead of prosecuting that unknown night journey. The carriage went at a hard pace straight along, then we made a complete turn and went along another straight road. It seemed to me that we were simply going over and over the same ground again; and so I took note of some salient point, and found that this was so. I would have liked to have asked the driver what this all meant, but I really feared to do so, for I thought that, placed as I was, any protest would have had no effect in case there had been an intention to delay. By-and-by, however, as I was curious to know how time was passing, I struck a match, and by its flame looked at my watch; it was within a few minutes of midnight. This gave me a sort of shock, for I suppose the general superstition about midnight was increased by my recent experiences. I waited with a sick feeling of suspense.

Then a dog began to howl somewhere in a farmhouse far down the road—a long, agonized wailing, as if from fear. The sound was taken up by another dog, and then another and another, till, borne on the wind which now sighed softly through the Pass, a wild howling began, which seemed to come from all over the country, as far as the imagination could grasp it through the gloom of the night. At the first howl the horses began to strain and rear, but the driver spoke to them soothingly, and they quieted down, but shivered and sweated as though after a run-away from sudden fright. Then, far off in the distance, from the mountains on each side of us began a louder and a sharper howling—that of wolves—which affected both the horses and myself in the same way—for I was minded to jump from the calèche and run, whilst they reared again and plunged madly, so that the driver had to use all his great strength to keep them from bolting. In a few minutes, however, my own ears got accustomed to the sound, and the horses so far became quiet that the driver was able to descend and to stand before them. He petted and soothed them, and whispered something in their ears, as I have heard of horse-tamers doing, and with extraordinary effect, for under his caresses they became quite manageable again, though they still trembled. The driver again took his seat, and shaking his reins, started off at a great pace. This time, after going to the far side of the Pass, he suddenly turned down a narrow roadway which ran sharply to the right.

Soon we were hemmed in with trees, which in places arched right over the roadway till we passed as through a tunnel; and again great frowning rocks guarded us boldly on either side. Though we were in shelter, we could hear the rising wind, for it moaned and whistled through the rocks, and the branches of the trees crashed together as we swept along. It grew colder and colder still, and fine, powdery snow began to fall, so that soon we and all around us were covered with a white blanket. The keen wind still carried the howling of the dogs, though this grew fainter as we went on our way. The baying of the wolves sounded nearer and nearer, as though they were closing round on us from every side. I grew dreadfully afraid, and the horses shared my fear; but the driver was not in the least disturbed. He kept turning his head to left and right, but I could not see anything through the darkness.

Suddenly, away on our left, I saw a faint flickering blue flame. The driver saw it at the same moment; he at once checked the horses and, jumping to the ground, disappeared into the darkness. I did not know what to do, the less as the howling of the wolves grew closer; but while I wondered, the driver suddenly appeared again, and without a word took his seat, and we resumed our journey. I think I must have fallen asleep and kept dreaming of the incident, for it seemed to be repeated endlessly, and now, looking back, it is like a sort of awful nightmare. Once the flame appeared so near the road, that even in the darkness around us I could watch the driver's motions. He went rapidly to where the blue flame arose—it must have been very faint, for it did not seem to illumine the place around it at all—and gathering a few stones, formed them

into some device. Once there appeared a strange optical effect: when he stood between me and the flame he did not obstruct it, for I could see its ghostly flicker all the same. This startled me, but as the effect was only momentary, I took it that my eyes deceived me, straining through the darkness. Then for a time there were no blue flames, and we sped onwards through the gloom, with the howling of the wolves around us, as though they were following in a moving circle.

At last there came a time when the driver went farther afield than he had yet gone, and during his absence the horses began to tremble worse than ever and to snort and scream with fright. I could not see any cause for it, for the howling of the wolves had ceased altogether; but just then the moon, sailing through the black clouds, appeared behind the jagged crest of a beetling, pine-clad rock, and by its light I saw around us a ring of wolves, with white teeth and lolling red tongues, with long, sinewy limbs and shaggy hair. They were a hundred times more terrible in the grim silence which held them than even when they howled. For myself, I felt a sort of paralysis of fear. It is only when a man comes face to face with such horrors that he can understand their true import.

All at once the wolves began to howl as though the moonlight had had some peculiar effect on them. The horses jumped about and reared, and looked helplessly round with eyes that rolled in a way painful to see; but the living ring of terror encompassed them on every side, and they had perforce to remain within it. I called to the coachman to come, for it seemed to me that our only chance was to try and break through the ring and to aid his approach. I shouted and beat the side of the calèche, hoping by the noise to scare the wolves from that side, so as to give him a chance of reaching the trap. How he came there, I know not, but I heard his voice raised in a tone of imperious command, and looking towards the sound, saw him stand in the roadway. As he swept his long arms, as though brushing aside some impalpable obstacle, the wolves fell back and back farther still. Just then a heavy cloud passed across the face of the moon.

When I could see again the driver was climbing into the calèche, and the wolves had disappeared. This was all so strange and uncanny that a dreadful fear came upon me, and I was afraid to speak or move. The time seemed interminable as we swept on our way, now in almost complete darkness, for the rolling clouds obscured the moon. We kept on ascending, with occasional periods of quick descent, but in the main always ascending. Suddenly I became conscious of the fact that the driver was in the act of pulling up the horses in the courtyard of a vast ruined castle, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the moonlit sky.

CHAPTER II

JONATHAN HARKER'S JOURNAL (*continued*)

MAY 5.—I must have been asleep, for certainly if I had been fully awake I must have noticed the approach to such a remarkable place. In the gloom the courtyard looked of considerable size, and as several dark ways led from it under great round arches it perhaps seemed bigger than it really is. I have not yet been able to see it by daylight.

When the calèche stopped the driver jumped down and held out his hand to assist me to alight. Again I could not but notice his prodigious strength. His hand actually seemed like a steel vice that could have crushed mine if he had chosen. Then he took out my traps, and placed them on the ground beside me as I stood close to a great door, old and studded with large iron nails, and set in a projecting doorway of massive stone. I could see even in the dim light that the stone was massively carved, but that the carving had been much worn by time and weather. As I stood, the driver jumped again into his seat and shook the reins; the horses started forward, and trap and all disappeared down one of the dark openings.

I stood in silence where I was, for I did not know what to do. Of bell or knocker there was no sign; through these frowning walls and dark window openings it was not likely that my voice could penetrate. The time I waited seemed endless, and I felt doubts and fears crowding upon me. What sort of place had I come to, and among what kind of people? What sort of grim adventure was it on which I had embarked? Was this a customary incident in the life of a solicitor's clerk sent out to explain the purchase of a London estate to a foreigner? Solicitor's clerk! Mina would not like that. Solicitor—for just before leaving London I got word that my examination was successful; and I am now a full-blown solicitor! I began to rub my eyes and pinch myself to see if I were awake. It all seemed like a horrible nightmare to me, and I expected that I should suddenly awake and find myself at home, with the dawn struggling in through the windows, as I had now and again felt in the morning after a day of overwork. But my flesh answered the pinching test, and my eyes were not to be deceived. I was indeed awake and among the Carpathians. All I could do now was to be patient, and to wait the coming of the morning.

Just as I had come to this conclusion I heard a heavy step approaching behind the great door, and saw through the chinks the gleam of a coming light. Then there was the sound of rattling chains and the clanking of massive bolts drawn back. A key was turned with the loud grating noise of long disuse, and the great door swung back.

Within stood a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere. He held in his hand an antique silver lamp, in which the flame burned without chimney or globe of any kind, throwing long quivering shadows as it flickered in the draught of the open door. The old man motioned me in with his right hand with a courtly gesture, saying in excellent English, but with a strange intonation:

"Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!" He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had

stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed as cold as ice—more like the hand of a dead than a living man. Again he said:

"Welcome to my house. Come freely. Go safely; and leave something of the happiness you bring!" The strength of the handshake was so much akin to that which I had noticed in the driver, whose face I had not seen, that for a moment I doubted if it were not the same person to whom I was speaking; so to make sure, I said interrogatively:

"Count Dracula?" He bowed in a courtly way as he replied:

"I am Dracula; and I bid you welcome, Mr. Harker, to my house. Come in; the night air is chill, and you must need to eat and rest." As he was speaking he put the lamp on a bracket on the wall, and stepping out, took my luggage; he had carried it in before I could forestall him. I protested, but he insisted:

"Nay, sir, you are my guest. It is late, and my people are not available. Let me see to your comfort myself." He insisted on carrying my traps along the passage, and then up a great winding stair, and along another great passage, on whose stone floor our steps rang heavily. At the end of this he threw open a heavy door, and I rejoiced to see within a well-lit room in which a table was spread for supper, and on whose mighty hearth a great fire of logs flamed and flared.

The Count halted, putting down my bags, closed the door, and crossing the room, opened another door, which led into a small octagonal room lit by a single lamp, and seemingly without a window of any sort. Passing through this, he opened another door, and motioned me to enter. It was a welcome sight; for here was a great bedroom well lighted and warmed with another log fire, which sent a hollow roar up the wide chimney. The Count himself set my luggage inside and withdrew, saying, before he closed the door:

"You will need, after your journey, to refresh yourself by making your toilet. I trust you will find all you wish. When you are ready come into the other room, where you will find your supper prepared."

The light and warmth and the Count's courteous welcome seemed to have dissipated all my doubts and fears. Having then reached my normal state, I discovered that I was half famished with hunger; so making a hasty toilet, I went into the other room.

I found supper already laid out. My host, who stood on one side of the great fireplace, leaning against the stonework, made a graceful wave of his hand to the table, and said:

"I pray you, be seated and sup how you please. You will, I trust, excuse me that I do not join you; but I have dined already, and I do not sup."

I handed to him the sealed letter which Mr. Hawkins had entrusted to me. He opened it and read it gravely; then, with a charming smile, he handed it to me to read. One passage of it, at least, gave me a thrill of pleasure:

"I much regret that an attack of gout, from which malady I am a constant sufferer, forbids absolutely any travelling on my part for some time to come; but I am happy to say I can send a sufficient substitute, one in whom I have every possible confidence. He is a young man, full of energy and talent in his own way, and of a very faithful disposition. He is discreet and silent, and has grown into manhood in my service. He shall be ready to attend on you when you will during his stay, and shall take your instructions in all matters."

The Count himself came forward and took off the cover of a dish, and I fell to at once on an excellent roast chicken. This, with some cheese and a salad and a bottle of old Tokay, of which I had two glasses, was my supper. During the time I was eating it the Count asked me many questions as to my journey, and I told him by degrees all I had experienced.

By this time I had finished my supper, and by my host's desire had drawn up a chair by the fire and begun to smoke a cigar which he offered me, at the same time excusing himself that he did not smoke. I had now an opportunity of observing him, and found him of a very marked physiognomy.

His face was a strong—a very strong—aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

Hitherto I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight, and they had seemed rather white and fine; but seeing them now close to me, I could not but notice that they were rather coarse—broad, with squat fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point. As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal. The Count, evidently noticing it, drew back; and with a grim sort of smile, which showed more than he had yet done his protuberant teeth, sat himself down again on his own side of the fireplace. We were both silent for a while; and as I looked towards the window I saw the first dim streak of the coming dawn. There seemed a strange stillness over everything; but as I listened I heard as if from down below in the valley the howling of many wolves. The Count's eyes gleamed, and he said:

"Listen to them—the children of the night. What music they make!" Seeing, I suppose, some expression in my face strange to him, he added:

"Ah, sir, you dwellers in the city cannot enter into the feelings of the hunter." Then he rose and said:—

"But you must be tired. Your bedroom is all ready, and to-morrow you shall sleep as late as you will. I have to be away till the afternoon; so sleep well and dream well!" and, with a courteous bow, he opened for me himself the door to the octagonal room, and I entered my bedroom. . . .

I am all in a sea of wonders. I doubt; I fear; I think strange things which I dare not confess to my own soul. God keep me, if only for the sake of those dear to me!

MAY 7.—It is again early morning, but I have rested and enjoyed the last twenty-four hours. I slept till late in the day, and awoke of my own accord. When I had dressed myself I went into the room where we had supped, and found a cold breakfast laid out, with coffee kept hot by the pot being placed on the hearth. There was a card on the table, on which was written:

"I have to be absent for a while. Do not wait for me.—D." So I set to and enjoyed a hearty meal. When I had done, I looked for a bell, so that I might let the servants know I had finished; but I could not find one. There are certainly odd deficiencies in the house considering the extraordinary evidences of wealth which are round me. The table service is of gold, and so beautifully wrought that it must be of immense value. The curtains and upholstery of the chairs and sofas and the hangings of my bed are of the costliest and most beautiful fabrics, and must have been of fabulous value when they were made, for they are centuries old, though in excellent order. I saw something like them in Hampton Court, but there they were worn and frayed and moth-eaten. But still in none of the rooms is there a mirror. There is not even a toilet glass on my table, and I had to get the little shaving glass from my bag before I could either shave or brush my hair. I have not yet seen a servant anywhere, or heard a sound near the castle except the howling of wolves. When I had finished my meal—I do not know whether to call it breakfast or dinner, for it was between five and six o'clock when I had it—I looked about for something to read, for I did not like to go about the castle until I had asked the Count's permission. There was absolutely nothing in the room, book, newspaper, or even writing materials; so I opened another door in the room and found a sort of library. The door opposite mine I tried, but found it locked.

In the library I found, to my great delight, a vast number of English books, whole shelves full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers. A table in the centre was littered with English magazines and newspapers, though none of them were of very recent date. The books were of the most varied kind—history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law—all relating to England and English life and customs and manners. There were even such books of reference as the London Directory, the "Red" and "Blue" books, Whitaker's Almanack, the Army and Navy Lists, and—it somehow gladdened my heart to see it—the Law List.

Whilst I was looking at the books, the door opened, and the Count entered. He saluted me in a hearty way, and hoped that I had had a good night's rest. Then he went on:

"I am glad you found your way in here, for I am sure there is much that will interest you. These friends"—and he laid his hand on some of the books—"have been good friends to me, and for some years past, ever since I had the idea of going to London, have given me many, many hours of pleasure. Through them I have come to know your great England; and to know her is to love her. I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is. But alas! as yet I only know your tongue through books. To you, my friend, I look that I know it to speak."

"But, Count," I said, "you know and speak English thoroughly!" He bowed gravely.

"I thank you, my friend, for your all too flattering estimate, but yet I fear that I am but a little way on the road I would travel. True, I know the grammar and the words, but yet I know not how to speak them."

"Indeed," I said, "you speak excellently."

"Not so," he answered. "Well I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble; I am *boyar;* the common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not—and to know not is to care not for. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops if he see me, or pause in his speaking, if he hear my words, to say, 'Ha! ha! a stranger!' I have been so long master that I would be master still—or at least that none other should be master of me. You come to me not alone as agent of my friend Peter Hawkins, of Exeter, to tell me all about my new estate in London. You shall, I trust, rest here with me a while, so that by our talking I may learn the English intonation; and I would that you tell me where I make error, even of the smallest, in my speaking. I am sorry that

THE GOLDEN TOUCH

King Midas saw a buttercup
In a meadow blowing;
King Midas saw a marigold
In a garden growing;
King Midas saw a yellowhammer
On a bough swinging;
King Midas heard the golden voice
Of my true love singing.

"Though I have the golden touch"
(Thus King Midas spake),
"Yet gold such as this gold
Can I never make."
And down upon his empty arms
He laid his grey head:
"The gods have made a mock of me,"
King Midas said.

—Jan Struther.

I had to be away so long to-day ; but you will, I know, forgive one who has so many important affairs in hand."

Of course I said all I could about being willing, and asked if I might come into that room when I chose. He answered : " Yes, certainly," and added :

" You may go anywhere you wish in the castle, except where the doors are locked, where of course you will not wish to go. There is reason that all things are as they are, and did you see with my eyes and know my knowledge you would perhaps better understand." I said I was sure of this, and then he went on :

" We are in Transylvania ; and Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things. Nay, from what you have told me of your experiences already, you know something of what strange things here may be."

This led to much conversation ; and as it was evident that he wanted to talk, if only for talking's sake, I asked him many questions regarding things that had already happened to me or come within my notice. Sometimes he sheered off the subject, or turned the conversation by pretending not to understand ; but generally he answered all I asked most frankly. Then as time went on, and I had got somewhat bolder, I asked him of some of the strange things of the preceding night, as, for instance, why the coachman went to the places where we had seen the blue flames. Was it indeed true that they showed where gold was hidden ? He then explained to me that it was commonly believed that on a certain night of the year—last night, in fact, when all evil spirits are supposed to have unchecked sway—a blue flame is seen over any place where treasure has been concealed. " That treasure has been hidden," he went on, " in the region through which you came last night, there can be but little doubt ; for it was the ground fought over for centuries by the Wallachian, the Saxon, and the Turk. Why, there is hardly a foot of soil in all this region that has not been enriched by the blood of men, patriots or invaders. In old days there were stirring times, when the Austrian and the Hungarian came up in hordes, and the patriots went out to meet them—men and women, the aged and the children too—and waited their coming on the rocks above the passes, that they might sweep destruction on them with their artificial avalanches. When the invader was triumphant he found but little, for whatever there was had been sheltered in the friendly soil."

" But how," said I, " can it have remained so long undiscovered, when there is a sure index to it if men will but take the trouble to look ? " The Count smiled, and as his lips ran back over his gums, the long, sharp, canine teeth showed out strangely ; he answered :

" Because your peasant is at heart a coward and a fool ! Those flames only appear on one night ; and on that night no man of this land will, if he can help it, stir without his doors. And, dear sir, even if he did he would not know what to do. Why, even the peasant that you tell me of who marked the place of the flame would not know where to look in daylight even for his own work. You would not, I dare be sworn, be able to find these places again ? "

" There you are right," I said. " I know no more than the dead where even to look for them." Then we drifted into other matters.

" Come," he said at last, " tell me of London and of the house which you have procured for me." With an apology for my remissness, I went into my own room to get the papers from my bag. Whilst I was placing them in order I heard a rattling of china and silver in the next room, and as I passed through, noticed that the table had been cleared and the lamp lit, for it was by this time deep into the dark. The lamps were also lit in the study or library, and I found the Count lying on the sofa, reading, of all things in the world, an English Bradshaw's Guide. When I came in he cleared the books and papers from the table ; and with him I went into plans and deeds and figures of all sorts. He was interested in everything, and asked me a myriad questions about the place and its surroundings. He clearly had studied beforehand all he could get on the subject of the neighbourhood, for he evidently at the end knew very much more than I did. When I remarked this, he answered :

" Well, but, my friend, is it not needful that I should ? When I go there I shall be all alone, and my friend Harker Jonathan—nay, pardon me, I fall into my country's habit of putting your patronymic first—my friend Jonathan Harker will not be by my side to correct and aid me. He will be in Exeter, miles away, probably working at papers of the law with my other friend, Peter Hawkins. So ! "

¶

WE went thoroughly into the business of the purchase of the estate at Purfleet. When I had told him the facts and got his signature to the necessary papers, and had written a letter with them ready to post to Mr. Hawkins, he began to ask me how I had come across so suitable a place. I read to him the notes which I had made at the time, and which I inscribe here :

" At Purfleet, on a by-road, I came across just such a place as seemed to be required, and where was displayed a dilapidated notice that the place was for sale. It is surrounded by a high wall, of ancient structure, built of heavy stones, and has not been repaired for a large number of years. The closed gates were of heavy old oak and iron, all eaten with rust.

" The estate is called Carfax, no doubt a corruption of the old *Quatre Face*, as the house is four-sided, agreeing with the cardinal points of the compass. It contains in all some twenty acres, quite surrounded by the solid stone wall above mentioned. There are many trees on it, which make it in places gloomy, and there is a deep, dark-looking pond or small lake, evidently fed by some springs, as the water is clear and flows away in a fair-sized stream. The house is very large and of all periods back, I should say, to mediæval times, for one part is of stone immensely thick, with only a few windows high up and heavily barred with iron. It looks like part of a keep, and is close to an old chapel or church. I could not enter it, as I had not the key of the door leading to it from the house, but I have taken views of it with my kodak from

various points. The house has been added to, but in a very straggling way, and I can only guess at the amount of ground it covers, which must be very great. There are but few houses close at hand, one being a very large house only recently added to and formed into a private lunatic asylum. It is not, however, visible from the grounds."

When I had finished, he said:

"I am glad that it is old and big. I myself am of an old family, and to live in a new house would kill me. A house cannot be made habitable in a day; and, after all, how few days go to make up a century. I rejoice also that there is a chapel of old times. We Transylvanian nobles love not to think that our bones may be amongst the common dead. I seek not gaiety nor mirth, nor the bright voluptuousness of much sunshine and sparkling waters which please the young and gay. I am no longer young; and my heart, through weary years of mourning over the dead, is not attuned to mirth. Moreover, the walls of my castle are broken; the shadows are many, and the wind breathes cold through the broken battlements and casements. I love the shade and the shadow, and would be alone with my thoughts when I may."

Somehow his words and his look did not seem to accord, or else it was that his cast of face made his smile look malignant and saturnine.

Presently, with an excuse, he left me, asking me to put all my papers together. He was some little time away, and I began to look at some of the books around me. One was an atlas, which I found, opened naturally at England, as if that map had been much used. On looking at it I found in certain places little rings marked, and on examining these I noticed that one was near London on the east side, manifestly where his new estate was situated; the other two were Exeter, and Whitby on the Yorkshire coast.

It was the better part of an hour when the Count returned. "Aha!" he said; "still at your books? Good! But you must not work always. Come; I am informed that your supper is ready." He took my arm, and we went into the next room, where I found an excellent supper ready on the table. The Count again excused himself, as he had dined out on his being away from home. But he sat as on the previous night, and chatted whilst I ate. After supper I smoked, as on the last evening, and the Count stayed with me, chatting and asking questions on every conceivable subject, hour after hour. I felt that it was getting very late indeed, but I did not say anything, for I felt under obligation to meet my host's wishes in every way. I was not sleepy, as the long sleep yesterday had fortified me; but I could not help experiencing that chill which comes over one at the coming of the dawn, which is like, in its way, the turn of the tide. They say that people who are near death die generally at the change to the dawn or the turn of the tide: anyone who has when tired, and tied as it were to his post, experienced this change in the atmosphere can well believe it. All at once we heard the crow of a cock coming up with preternatural shrillness through the clear morning air; Count Dracula, jumping to his feet, said:

"Why, there is the morning again! How remiss I am to let you stay up so long. You must make your conversation regarding my dear new country of England less interesting, so that I may not forget how time flies by us," and, with a courtly bow, he left me.

I went into my own room and drew the curtains, but there was little to notice; my window opened into the courtyard, all I could see was the warm grey of quickening sky. So I pulled the curtains again, and have written of this day.

MAY 8.—I began to fear, as I wrote, that I was getting too diffuse; but now I am glad that I went into detail from the first, for there is something so strange about this place and all in it that I cannot but feel uneasy. I wish I were safe out of it, or that I had never come. It may be that this strange night-existence is telling on me; but would that that were all! If there were anyone to talk to I could bear it, but there is no one. I have only the Count to speak with, and he!—I fear I am myself the only living soul within the place. Let me be prosaic so far as facts can be; it will help me to bear up, and imagination must not run riot with me. If it does I am lost. Let me say at once how I stand—or seem to.

I only slept a few hours when I went to bed, and feeling that I could not sleep any more, got up. I had hung my shaving glass by the window, and was just beginning to shave. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard the Count's voice saying to me, "Good morning." I started, for it amazed me that I had not seen him, since the reflection of the glass covered the whole room behind me. In starting I had cut myself slightly, but did not notice it at the moment. Having answered the Count's salutation, I turned to the glass again to see how I had been mistaken. This time there could be no error, for the man was close to me, and I could see him over my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed; but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself. This was startling, and, coming on the top of so many strange things, was beginning to increase that vague feeling of uneasiness which I always have when the Count is near; but at that instant I saw that the cut had bled a little, and the blood was trickling over my chin. I laid down the razor, turning as I did so half round to look for some sticking plaster. When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat. I drew away, and his hand touched the string of beads which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him, for the fury passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there.

"Take care," he said, "take care how you cut yourself. It is more dangerous than you think in this country." Then seizing the shaving glass, he went on: "And this is the wretched thing that has done the mischief. It is a foul bauble of man's vanity. Away with it!" And opening the heavy window with one wrench of his terrible hand, he flung out the glass, which was shattered into a thousand pieces on the stones of the courtyard far below. Then he withdrew without a word. It is very

annoying, for I do not see how I am to shave, unless in my watch-case or the bottom of the shaving pot, which is fortunately of metal.

When I went into the dining-room, breakfast was prepared; but I could not find the Count anywhere. So I breakfasted alone. It is so strange that as yet I have not seen the Count eat or drink. He must be a very peculiar man! After breakfast I did a little exploring in the castle. I went out on the stairs and found a room looking towards the south. The view was magnificent, and from where I stood there was every opportunity of seeing it. The castle is on the very edge of a terrible precipice. A stone falling from the window would fall a thousand feet without touching anything! As far as the eye can reach is a sea of green tree-tops, with occasionally a deep rift where there is a chasm. Here and there are silver threads where the rivers wind in deep gorges through the forests.

But I am not in heart to describe beauty, for when I had seen the view I explored further; doors, doors, doors everywhere, and all locked and bolted. In no place save from the windows in the castle walls is there an available exit.

The castle is a veritable prison, and I am a prisoner!

CHAPTER III

JONATHAN HARKER'S JOURNAL (*continued*)

WHEN I found that I was a prisoner a wild feeling came over me. I rushed up and down the stairs, trying every door and peering out of every window I could find; but after a little the conviction of my helplessness overpowered all other feelings. When I look back after a few hours I think I must have been mad for the time, for I behaved much as a rat does in a trap. When, however, the conviction had come to me that I was helpless I sat down quietly—as quietly as I have ever done anything in my life—and began to think over what was best to be done. I am thinking still, and as yet have come to no definite conclusion. Of one thing only am I certain: that it is no use making my ideas known to the Count. He knows well that I am imprisoned; and as he has done it himself, and has doubtless his own motives for it, he would only deceive me if I trusted him fully with the facts. So far as I can see, my only plan will be to keep my knowledge and my fears to myself, and my eyes open. I am, I know, either being deceived, like a baby, by my own fears, or else I am in desperate straits; and if the latter be so, I need, and shall need, all my brains to get through. I had hardly come to this conclusion when I heard the great door below shut, and knew that the Count had returned. He did not come at once into the library, so I went cautiously to my own room and found him making the bed. This was odd, but only confirmed what I had all along thought—that there were no servants in the house. When later I saw him through the chink of the hinges of the door laying the table in the dining-room, I was assured of it; for if he does himself all these menial offices, surely it is proof that there is no one else to do them. This gave me a fright, for if there is no one else in the castle, it must have been the Count himself who was the driver of the coach that brought me here. This is a terrible thought; for if so, what does it mean that he could control the wolves, as he did, by only holding up his hand in silence? How was it that all the people at Bistritz and on the coach had some terrible fear for me? What meant the giving of the crucifix, of the garlic, of the wild rose, of the mountain ash? Bless that good, good woman who hung the crucifix round my neck! for it is a comfort and a strength to me whenever I touch it. It is odd that a thing which I have been taught to regard with disfavour and as idolatrous, should in a time of loneliness and trouble be of help. Is it that there is something in the essence of the thing itself, or that it is a medium, a tangible help, in conveying memories of sympathy and comfort? Some time, if it may be, I must examine this matter and try to make up my mind about it. In the meantime I must find out all I can about Count Dracula, as it may help me to understand. To-night he may talk of himself, if I turn the conversation that way. I must be very careful, however, not to awake his suspicion.

Midnight.—I have had a long talk with the Count. I asked him a few questions on Transylvanian history, and he warmed up to the subject wonderfully. In his speaking of things and people, and especially of battles, he spoke as if he had been present at them all. This he afterwards explained by saying that to a *boyar* the pride of his house and name is his own pride, that their glory is his glory, and that their fate is his fate. Whenever he spoke of his house he always said "we," and spoke almost in the plural, like a king speaking. I wish I could put down all he said exactly as he said it, for to me it was most fascinating. It seemed to have in it a whole history of the country. He grew excited as he spoke, and walked about the room pulling his great white moustache and grasping anything on which he laid his hands as though he would crush it by main strength. One thing he said which I shall put down as nearly as I can; for it tells in its way the story of his race:

"We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship. Here, in the whirlpool of European races, the Ugric tribe bore down from Iceland the fighting spirit which Thor and Wodin gave them, which their Berserkers displayed to such fell intent on the seaboards of Europe, ay, and of Asia and Africa, too, till the peoples thought that the were-wolves themselves had come. Here, too, when they came, they found the Huns, whose warlike fury had swept the earth like a living flame, till the dying peoples held that in their veins ran the blood of those old witches, who, expelled from Scythia, had mated with the devils in the desert. Fools, fools! What devil or what witch was ever so great as Attila, whose blood is in these veins?" He held up his arms. "Is it a wonder that we were a conquering race; that we were proud; that when the Magyar, the Lombard, the Avar, the Bulgar, or the Turk poured his thousands on our frontiers, we drove them back? Is it strange that when Arpad and his legions swept through the Hungarian fatherland he found us here when he reached the frontier; that the

(*Continued on page* 162)

Honfoglalas was completed there? And when the Hungarian flood swept eastward, the Szekelys were claimed as kindred by the victorious Magyars, and to us for centuries was trusted the guarding of the frontier of Turkey-land; ay and more than that, endless duty of the frontier guard, for, as the Turks say, 'water sleeps, and enemy is sleepless.' Who more gladly than we throughout the Four Nations received the 'bloody sword,' or at its warlike call flocked quicker to the standard of the King? When was redeemed that great shame of my nation, the shame of Cassova, when the flags of the Wallach and the Magyar went down beneath the Crescent, who was it but one of my own race who as Voivode crossed the Danube and beat the Turk on his own ground? This was a Dracula indeed! Woe was it that his own unworthy brother, when he had fallen, sold his people to the Turk and brought the shame of slavery on them! Was it not this Dracula, indeed, who inspired that other of his race who in a later age again and again brought his forces over the great river into Turkey-land; who, when he was beaten back, came again, and again, and again, though he had to come alone from the bloody field where his troops were being slaughtered, since he knew that he alone could ultimately triumph? They said that he thought only of himself. Bah! what good are peasants without a leader? Where ends the war without a brain and heart to conduct it? Again, when, after the battle of Mohacs, we threw off the Hungarian yoke, we of the Dracula blood were amongst their leaders, for our spirit would not brook that we were not free. Ah, young sir, the Szekelys—and the Dracula as their heart's blood, their brains, and their swords—can boast a record that mushroom growths like the Hapsburgs and the Romanoffs can never reach. The war-like days are over. Blood is too precious a thing in these days of dishonourable peace; and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told."

It was by this time close on morning, and we went to bed. (*Mem.*, this diary seems horribly like the beginning of the "Arabian Nights," for everything has to break off at cock-crow—or like the ghost of Hamlet's father.)

MAY 12.—Let me begin with facts—bare, meagre facts, verified by books and figures, and of which there can be no doubt. I must not confuse them with experiences which will have to rest on my own observation or my memory of them. Last evening when the Count came from his room, he began by asking me questions on legal matters and on the doing of certain kinds of business. I had spent the day wearily over books, and, simply to keep my mind occupied, went over some of the matters I had been examined in at Lincoln's Inn. There was a certain method in the Count's inquiries, so I shall try to put them down in sequence; the knowledge may somehow or some time be useful to me.

First, he asked if a man in England might have two solicitors, or more. I told him he might have a dozen if he wished, but that it would not be wise to have more than one solicitor engaged in one transaction, as only one could act at a time and that to change would be certain to militate against his interest. He seemed to understand thoroughly, and went on to ask if there would be any practical difficulty in having one man to attend, say, to banking, and another to look after shipping, in case local help were needed in a place far from the home of the banking solicitor. I asked him to explain more fully, so that I might not by any chance mislead him, so he said:

"I shall illustrate. Your friend and mine, Mr. Peter Hawkins, from under the shadow of your beautiful cathedral at Exeter, which is far from London, buys for me through your good self my place at London. Good! Now here let me say frankly, lest you should think it strange that I have sought the services of one so far off from London instead of someone resident there, that my motive was that no local interest might be served save my wish only; and as one of London resident might, perhaps, have some purpose of himself or friend to serve, I went thus afield to seek my agent, whose labours should be only to my interest. Now, suppose I, who have much of affairs, wish to ship goods, say, to Newcastle, or Durham, or Harwich, or Dover, might it not be that it could with more ease be done by consigning to one in these ports?" I answered that certainly it would be most easy, but that we solicitors had a system of agency one for the other, so that local work could be done locally on instruction from any solicitor, so that the client, simply placing himself in the hands of one man, could have his wishes carried out by him without further trouble.

"But," said he, "I could be at liberty to direct myself. Is it not so?"

"Of course," I replied; "and such is often done by men of business, who do not like the whole of their affairs to be known by any one person."

"Good!" he said, and then went on to ask about the means of making consignments and the forms to be gone through, and of all sorts of difficulties which might arise, but by forethought could be guarded against. I explained all these things to him to the best of my ability, and he certainly left me under the impression that he would have made a wonderful solicitor, for there was nothing that he did not think of or foresee. For a man who was never in the country, and who did not evidently do much in the way of business, his knowledge and acumen were wonderful. When he had satisfied himself on these points of which he had spoken, and I had verified all as well as I could by the books available, he suddenly stood up and said:

"Have you written since your first letter to our friend Mr. Peter Hawkins, or to any other?" It was with some bitterness in my heart that I answered that I had not, that as yet I had not seen any opportunity of sending letters to anybody.

"Then write now, my young friend," he said, laying a heavy hand on my shoulder; "write to our friend and to any other; and say, if it will please you, that you shall stay with me until a month from now."

"Do you wish me to stay so long?" I asked, for my heart grew cold at the thought.

"I desire it much; nay, I will take no refusal. When your master, employer, what you will,

engaged that someone should come on his behalf, it was understood that my needs only were to be consulted. I have not stinted. Is it not so ? "

What could I do but bow acceptance ? It was Mr. Hawkins's interest, not mine, and I had to think of him, not myself ; and besides, while Count Dracula was speaking, there was that in his eyes and in his bearing which made me remember that I was a prisoner, and that if I wished it I could have no choice. The Count saw his victory in my bow, and his mastery in the trouble of my face, for he began at once to use them, but in his own smooth, restless way :

" I pray you, my good young friend, that you will not discourse of things other than business in your letters. It will doubtless please your friends to know that you are well, and that you look forward to getting home to them. Is it not so ? " As he spoke he handed me three sheets of note-paper and three envelopes. They were all of the thinnest foreign post, and looking at them, then at him, and noticing his quiet smile, with the sharp, canine teeth lying over the red under-lip, I understood as well as if he had spoken that I should be careful what I wrote, for he would be able to read it. So I determined to write only formal notes now, but to write fully to Mr. Hawkins in secret, and also to Mina, for to her I could write in shorthand, which would puzzle the Count, if he did see it. When I had written my two letters I sat quiet, reading a book whilst the Count wrote several notes, referring as he wrote them to some books on his table. Then he took up my two and placed them with his own, and put by his writing materials, after which, the instant the door had closed behind him, I leaned over and looked at the letters, which were face down on the table. I felt no compunction in doing so, for under the circumstances I felt that I should protect myself in every way I could.

One of the letters was directed to Samuel F. Billington, No. 7, The Crescent, Whitby ; another to Herr Leutner, Varna ; the third was to Coutts & Co., London ; and the fourth to Herren Klopstock and Billreuth, bankers, Budapest. The second and fourth were unsealed. I was just about to look at them when I saw the door-handle move. I sank back in my seat, having just had time to replace the letters as they had been and to resume my book before the Count, holding still another letter in his hand, entered the room. He took up the letters on the table and stamped them carefully, and then turning to me, said :

" I trust you will forgive me, but I have much work to do in private this evening. You will, I hope, find all things as you wish." At the door he turned, and after a moment's pause said :

" Let me advise you, my dear young friend, nay, let me warn you with all seriousness, that should you leave these rooms you will not by any chance go to sleep in any other part of the castle. It is old, and has many memories, and there are bad dreams for those who sleep unwisely. Be warned ! Should sleep now or ever overcome you, or be like to do, then haste to your own chamber or to these rooms, for your rest will then be safe. But if you be not careful in this respect, then—— " He finished his speech in a gruesome way, for he motioned with his hands as if he were washing them. I quite understood ; my only doubt was as to whether any dream could be more terrible than the unnatural, horrible net of gloom and mystery which seemed closing round me.

Later.—I endorse the last words written, but this time there is no doubt in question. I shall not fear to sleep in any place where he is not. I have placed the crucifix over the head of my bed—I imagine that my rest is thus freer from dreams ; and there it shall remain.

When he left me I went to my room. After a little while, not hearing any sound, I came out and went up the stone stair to where I could look out towards the south. There was some sense of freedom in the vast expanse, inaccessible though it was to me, as compared with the narrow darkness of the courtyard. Looking out on this, I felt that I was indeed in prison, and I seemed to want a breath of fresh air, though it were of the night. I am beginning to feel this nocturnal existence tell on me. It is destroying my nerve. I start at my own shadow, and am full of all sorts of horrible imaginings. God knows that there is ground for any terrible fear in this accursed place ! I looked out over the beautiful expanse, bathed in soft yellow moonlight till it was almost as light as day. In the soft light the distant hills became melted, and the shadows in the valleys and gorges of velvety blackness. The mere beauty seemed to cheer me ; there was peace and comfort in every breath I drew. As I leaned from the window my eye was caught by something moving a story below me, and somewhat to my left, where I imagined, from the lie of the rooms, that the windows of the Count's own room would look out. The window at which I stood was tall and deep, stone-mullioned, and though weather-worn, was still complete ; but it was evidently many a day since the case had been there. I drew back behind the stonework, and looked carefully out.

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WHAT I saw was the Count's head coming out from the window. I did not see the face, but I knew the man by the neck and the movement of his back and arms. In any case I could not mistake the hands which I had had so many opportunities of studying. I was at first interested and somewhat amused, for it is wonderful how small a matter will interest and amuse a man when he is a prisoner. But my very feelings changed to repulsion and terror when I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss, *face down*, with his cloak spreading out around him like great wings. At first I could not believe my eyes, I thought it was some trick of the moonlight, some weird effect of shadow ; but I kept looking, and it could be no delusion. I saw the fingers and toes grasp the corners of the stones, worn clear of the mortar by the stress of years, and by thus using every projection and inequality move downwards with considerable speed, just as a lizard moves along a wall.

What manner of man is this, or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of man ? I

feel the dread of this horrible place overpowering me; I am in fear—in awful fear—and there is no escape for me; I am encompassed about with terrors that I dare not think of. . . .

MAY 15.—Again have I seen the Count go out in his lizard fashion. He moved downwards in a sidelong way, some hundred feet down, and a good deal to the left. He vanished into some hole or window. When his head had disappeared I leaned out to try and see more, but without avail—the distance was too great to allow a proper angle of sight. I knew he had left the castle now, and thought to use the opportunity to explore more than I had dared to do as yet. I went back to the room, and taking a lamp, tried all the doors. They were all locked as I had expected, and the locks were comparatively new; but I went down the stone stairs to the hall where I had entered originally. I found I could pull back the bolts easily enough and unhook the great chains; but the door was locked, and the key was gone! That key must be in the Count's room; I must watch should his door be unlocked, so that I may get it and escape. I went on to make a thorough examination of the various stairs and passages, and to try the doors that opened from them. One or two small rooms near the hall were open, but there was nothing to see in them except old furniture, dusty with age and moth-eaten. At last, however, I found one door at the top of a stairway which, though it seemed to be locked, gave a little under pressure. I tried it harder, and found that it was not really locked, but that the resistance came from the fact that the hinges had fallen somewhat, and the heavy door rested on the floor. Here was an opportunity which I might not have again, so I exerted myself, and with many efforts forced it back so that I could enter. I was now in a wing of the castle farther to the right than the rooms I knew and a story lower down.

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FROM the windows I could see the suite of rooms lay along to the south of the castle, the windows of the end room looking out both west and south. On the latter side, as well as to the former, there was a great precipice. The castle was built on the corner of a great rock, so that on three sides it was quite impregnable, and great windows were placed here where sling, or bow, or culverin could not reach, and consequently light and comfort, impossible to a position which had to be guarded, were secured. To the west was a great valley, and then, rising far away, great jagged mountain fastnesses, rising peak on peak, the sheer rock studded with mountain ash and thorn, whose roots clung in cracks and crevices and crannies of the stone. This was evidently the portion of the castle occupied in bygone days, for the furniture had more air of comfort than any I had seen. The windows were curtainless, and the yellow moonlight, flooding in through the diamond panes, enabled one even to see colours, whilst it softened the wealth of dust which lay over all and disguised in some measure the ravages of time and the moth. My lamp seemed to be of little effect in the brilliant moonlight, but I was glad to have it with me, for there was a dread loneliness in the place which chilled my heart and made my nerves tremble. Still, it was better than living alone in the rooms which I had come to hate from the presence of the Count, and after trying a little to school my nerves, I found a soft quietude come over me. Here I am, sitting at a little oak table where in old times possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter, and writing in my diary in shorthand all that has happened since I closed it last. It is nineteenth century up to date with a vengeance. And yet, unless my senses deceive me, the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere "modernity" cannot kill.

Later: the Morning of May 16.—God preserve my sanity, for to this I am reduced. Safety and the assurance of safety are things of the past. Whilst I live on here there is but one thing to hope for: that I may not go mad, if, indeed, I be not mad already. If I be sane, then surely it is maddening to think that of all the foul things that lurk in this hateful place the Count is the least dreadful to me; that to him alone I can look for safety, even though this be only whilst I can serve his purpose. Great God! merciful God! Let me be calm, for out of that way lies madness indeed. I begin to get new lights on certain things which have puzzled me. Up to now I never quite knew what Shakespeare meant when he made Hamlet say:

"My tablets! quick, my tablets!
'Tis meet that I put it down," etc.,

for now, feeling as though my brain were unhinged or as if the shock had come which must end in its undoing, I turn to my diary for repose. The habit of entering accurately must help to soothe me.

The Count's mysterious warning frightened me at the time; it frightens me more now when I think of it, for in future he has a fearful hold upon me, I shall fear to doubt what he may say!

When I had written in my diary and had fortunately replaced the book and pen in my pocket, I felt sleepy. The Count's warning came into my mind, but I took a pleasure in disobeying it. The sense of sleep was upon me, and with it the obstinacy which sleep brings as outrider. The soft moonlight soothed, and the wide expanse without gave a sense of freedom which refreshed me. I determined not to return to-night to the gloom-haunted rooms, but to sleep here, where of old ladies had sat and sung and lived sweet lives whilst their gentle breasts were sad for their menfolk away in the midst of remorseless wars. I drew a great couch out of its place near the corner, so that, as I lay, I could look at the lovely view to east and south, and unthinking of and uncaring for the dust, composed myself for sleep.

I suppose I must have fallen asleep; I hope so, but I fear, for all that followed was startlingly real—so real that now, sitting here in the broad, full sunlight of the morning, I cannot in the least believe that it was all sleep.

I was not alone. The room was the same, unchanged in any way since I came into it; I could see along the floor, in the brilliant moon-

light, my own footsteps marked where I had disturbed the long accumulation of dust. In the moonlight opposite me were three young women, ladies by their dress and manner. I thought at the time that I must be dreaming when I saw them, for, though the moonlight was behind them, they threw no shadow on the floor. They came close to me and looked at me for some time, and then whispered together. Two were dark, and had high aquiline noses, like the Count, and great dark, piercing eyes, that seemed to be almost red when contrasted with the pale yellow moon. The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great, wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires. I seemed somehow to know her face, and to know it in connexion with some dreamy fear, but I could not recollect at the moment how or where. All three had brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. It is not good to note this down, lest some day it should meet Mina's eyes and cause her pain ; but it is the truth. They whispered together, and then they all three laughed—such a silvery, musical laugh, but as hard as though the sound never could have come through the softness of human lips. It was like the intolerable, tingling sweetness of water-glasses when played on by a cunning hand. The fair girl shook her head coquettishly, and the other two urged her on. One said :

" Go on ! You are first, and we shall follow ; yours is the right to begin." The other added :

" He is young and strong ; there are kisses for us all." I lay quiet, looking out under my eyelashes in an agony of delightful anticipation. The fair girl advanced and bent over me till I could feel the movement of her breath upon me. Sweet it was in one sense, honey-sweet, and sent the same tingling through the nerves as her voice, but with a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood.

I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The fair girl went on her knees, and bent over me, fairly gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my throat and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer —nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited—waited with beating heart.

But at that instant another sensation swept through me as quick as lightning. I was conscious of the presence of the Count, and of his being as if lapped in a storm of fury. As my eyes opened involuntarily I saw his strong hand grasp the slender neck of the fair woman and with giant's power draw it back, the blue eyes transformed with fury, the white teeth champing with rage, and the fair cheeks blazing red with passion. But the Count ! Never did I imagine such wrath and fury, even in the demons of the pit. His eyes were positively blazing. His face was deathly pale, and the lines of it were hard like drawn wires ; the thick eyebrows that met over the nose now seemed like a heaving bar of white-hot metal. With a fierce sweep of his arm, he hurled the woman from him, and then motioned to the others, as though he were beating them back ; it was the same imperious gesture that I had seen used to the wolves. In a voice which, though low and almost a whisper, seemed to cut through the air and then ring round the room, he exclaimed :

" How dare you touch him, any of you ? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it ? This man belongs to me ! Beware how you meddle with him, or you'll have to deal with me." The fair girl, with a laugh of ribald coquetry, turned to answer him :

" You yourself never loved ; you never love ! " On this the other women joined, and such a mirthless, hard, soulless laughter rang through the room that it almost made me faint to hear ; it seemed like the pleasure of fiends. Then the Count turned, after looking at my face attentively, and said in a soft whisper :

" Yes, I too can love ; you yourselves can tell it from the past. Is it not so ? Well, now I promise you that when I am done with him you shall kiss him at your will. Now go ! go ! I must awaken him, for there is work to be done."

" Are we to have nothing to-night ? " said one of them, with a low laugh, as she pointed to the bag which he had thrown upon the floor, and which moved as though there were some living thing within it. For answer he nodded his head. One of the women jumped forward and opened it. If my ears did not deceive me there was a gasp and a low wail, as of a half-smothered child. The women closed round, whilst I was aghast with horror ; but as I looked they disappeared, and with them the dreadful bag. There was no door near them, and they could not have passed me without my noticing. They simply seemed to fade into the rays of the moonlight and pass out through the window, for I could see outside the dim, shadowy forms for a moment before they entirely faded away.

Then the horror overcame me, and I sank down unconscious.

CHAPTER IV

JONATHAN HARKER'S JOURNAL (*continued*)

I AWOKE in my own bed. If it be that I had not dreamt, the Count must have carried me here. I tried to satisfy myself on the subject, but could not arrive at any unquestionable result. To be sure, there were small evidences, such as that my clothes were folded and laid by in a manner which was not my habit. My watch was still unwound, and I am rigorously

accustomed to wind it the last thing before going to bed, and many such details. But these things are no proof, for they may have been evidences that my mind was not as usual, and, from some cause or another, I had certainly been much upset. I must watch for proof. Of one thing I am glad: if it was the Count that carried me here and undressed me, he must have been hurried in his task, for my pockets are intact. I am sure this diary would have been a mystery to him which he would not have brooked. He would have taken or destroyed it. As I look round this room, although it has been to me so full of fear, it is now a sort of sanctuary, for nothing can be more dreadful than those awful women, who were—who *are*—waiting to suck my blood.

May 18.—I have been down to look at that room again in daylight, for I *must* know the truth. When I got to the doorway at the top of the stairs I found it closed. It had been so forcibly driven against the jamb that part of the woodwork was splintered. I could see that the bolt of the lock had not been shot, but the door is fastened from the inside. I fear it was no dream, and must act on this surmise.

MAY 19.—I am in the toils. Last night the Count asked me in the suavest tones to write three letters, one saying that my work here was nearly done, and that I should start for home within a few days, another that I was starting on the next morning from the time of the letter, and the third that I had left the castle and arrived at Bistritz. I would fain have rebelled, but felt that in the present state of things it would be madness to quarrel openly with the Count whilst I am so absolutely in his power; and to refuse would be to excite his suspicion and to arouse his anger. He knows that I know too much, and that I must not live, lest I be dangerous to him; my only chance is to prolong my opportunities. Something may occur which will give me a chance to escape. I saw in his eyes something of that gathering wrath which was manifest when he hurled that fair woman from him. He explained to me that posts were few and uncertain, and that my writing now would ensure ease of mind to my friends; and he assured me with so much impressiveness that he would countermand the later letters, which would be held over at Bistritz until due time in case chance would admit of my prolonging my stay, that to oppose him would have been to create new suspicion. I therefore pretended to fall in with his views, and asked him what dates I should put on the letters. He calculated a minute, and then said:

"The first should be June 12, the second June 19, and the third June 29."

I know now the span of my life. God help me!

May 28.—There is a chance of escape, or at any rate of being able to send word home. A band of Szgany have come to the castle, and are encamped in the courtyard. These Szgany are gipsies; I have notes of them in my book. They are peculiar to this part of the world, though allied to the ordinary gipsies all the world over. There are thousands of them in Hungary and Transylvania, who are almost outside all law. They attach themselves as a rule to some great noble or *boyar*, and call themselves by his name. They are fearless and without religion, save superstition, and they talk only their own varieties of the Romany tongue.

I shall write some letters home, and shall try to get them to have them posted. I have already spoken them through my window to begin an acquaintanceship. They took their hats off and made obeisance and many signs, which, however, I could not understand any more than I could their spoken language. . . .

I have written the letters. Mina's is in shorthand, and I simply ask Mr. Hawkins to communicate with her. To her I have explained my situation, but without the horrors which I may only surmise. It would shock and frighten her to death were I to expose my heart to her. Should the letters not carry, then the Count shall not yet know my secret or the extent of my knowledge. . . .

I have given the letters; I threw them through the bars of my window with a gold piece, and made what signs I could to have them posted. The man who took them pressed them to his heart and bowed, and then put them in his cap. I could do no more. I stole back to the study, and began to read. As the Count did not come in, I have written here. . . .

The Count has come. He sat down beside me, and said in his smoothest voice as he opened two letters:

"The Szgany has given me these, of which, though I know not whence they come, I shall, of course, take care. See!"—he must have looked at it—"one is from you, and to my friend Peter Hawkins; the other"—here he caught sight of the strange symbols as he opened the envelope, and the dark look came into his face, and his eyes blazed wickedly—"the other is a vile thing, an outrage upon friendship and hospitality! It is not signed. Well! so it cannot matter to us!" And he calmly held letter and envelope in the flame of the lamp till they were consumed. Then he went on:

"The letter to Hawkins—that I shall, of course, send on, since it is yours. Your letters are sacred to me. Your pardon, my friend, that unknowingly I did break the seal. Will you not cover it again?" He held out the letter to me, and with a courteous bow handed me a clean envelope. I could only redirect it and hand it to him in silence. When he went out of the room I could hear the key turn softly. A minute later I went over and tried it, and the door was locked.

When, an hour or two after, the Count came quietly into the room, his coming awakened me, for I had gone to sleep on the sofa. He was very courteous and very cheery in his manner, and seeing that I had been sleeping, he said:

"So, my friend, you are tired? Get to bed. There is the surest rest. I may not have the pleasure to talk to-night, since there are many labours to me; but you will sleep, I pray." I passed to my room and went to bed, and, strange to say, slept without dreaming. Despair has its own calms.

May 31.—This morning when I woke I thought I would provide myself with some paper and envelopes from my bag and keep them in my pocket, so that I might write in case I should get an opportunity; but again a surprise, again a shock!

Every scrap of paper was gone, and with it all my notes, my memoranda relating to railways and travel, my letter of credit, in fact all that might be useful to me were I once outside the castle. I sat and pondered a while, and then some thought occurred to me, and I made search of my portmanteau and in the wardrobe where I had placed my clothes.

The suit in which I had travelled was gone, and also my overcoat and rug; I could find no trace of them anywhere. This looked like some new scheme of villainy. . . .

JUNE 17.—This morning, as I sat on the edge of my bed cudgelling my brains, I heard without a cracking of whips and pounding and scraping of horses' feet up the rocky path beyond the courtyard. With joy I hurried to the window, and saw drive into the yard two great leiter-wagons, each drawn by eight sturdy horses, and at the head of each pair a Slovak, with his wide hat, great, nail-studded belt, dirty sheepskin, and high boots. They had also their long staves in hand. I ran to the door, intending to descend and try and join them through the main hall, as I thought that way might be opened for them. Again a shock: my door was fastened on the outside.

Then I ran to the window and cried to them. They looked up at me stupidly and pointed, but just then the "hetman" of the Szgany came out, and seeing them pointing to my window, said something, at which they laughed. Henceforth no effort of mine, no piteous cry or agonized entreaty, would make them even look at me. They resolutely turned away. The leiter-wagons contained great, square boxes, with handles of thick rope; these were evidently empty by the ease with which the Slovaks handled them, and by their resonance as they were roughly moved. When they were all unloaded and packed in a great heap in one corner of the yard, the Slovaks were given some money by the Szgany, and spitting on it for luck, lazily went each to his horse's head. Shortly afterwards I heard the cracking of their whips die away in the distance.

June 24, before morning.—Last night the Count left me early, and locked himself into his own room. As soon as I dared I ran up the winding stair, and looked out of the window, which opened south. I thought I would watch for the Count, for there is something going on. The Szgany are quartered somewhere in the castle, and are doing work of some kind. I know it, for now and then I hear a far-away, muffled sound as of mattock and spade, and, whatever it is, it must be to the end of some ruthless villainy.

I had been at the window somewhat less than half an hour, when I saw something coming out of the Count's window. I drew back and watched carefully, and saw the whole man emerge. It was a new shock to me to find that he had on the suit of clothes which I had worn whilst travelling here, and slung over his shoulder the terrible bag which I had seen the women take away. There could be no doubt as to his quest, and in my garb, too! This, then, is his new scheme of evil: that he will allow others to see me, as they think, so that he may both leave evidence that I have been seen in the towns or villages posting my own letters, and that any wickedness which he may do shall by the local people be attributed to me.

It makes me rage to think that this can go on, and whilst I am shut up here, a veritable prisoner, but without that protection of the law which is even a criminal's right and consolation.

I thought I would watch for the Count's return, and for a long time sat doggedly at the window. Then I began to notice that there were some quaint little specks floating in the rays of the moonlight. They were like the tiniest grains of dust, and they whirled round and gathered in clusters in a nebulous sort of way. I watched them with a sense of soothing, and a sort of calm stole over me. I leaned back in the embrasure in a more comfortable position, so that I could enjoy more fully the aërial gambolling.

Something made me start up, a low, piteous howling of dogs somewhere far below in the valley, which was hidden from my sight. Louder it seemed to ring in my ears, and the floating motes of dust to take new shapes to the sound as they danced in the moonlight. I felt myself struggling to awake to some call of my instincts; nay, my very soul was struggling, and my half-remembered sensibilities were striving to answer the call. I was becoming hypnotized! Quicker and quicker danced the dust, and the moonbeams seemed to quiver as they went by me into the mass of gloom beyond. More and more they gathered till they seemed to take dim phantom shapes. And then I started, broad awake and in full possession of my senses, and ran screaming from the place. The phantom shapes, which were becoming gradually materialized from the moonbeams, were those of the three ghostly women to whom I was doomed. I fled, and felt somewhat safer in my own room, where there was no moonlight and where the lamp was burning brightly.

When a couple of hours had passed I heard something stirring in the Count's room, something like a sharp wail quickly suppressed; and then there was silence, deep, awful silence, which chilled me. With a beating heart, I tried the door; but I was locked in my prison, and could do nothing. I sat down and simply cried.

As I sat I heard a sound in the courtyard without—the agonized cry of a woman. I rushed to the window, and throwing it up, peered out between the bars. There, indeed, was a woman with dishevelled hair, holding her hands over her heart as one distressed with running. She was leaning against a corner of the gateway. When she saw my face at the window she threw herself forward, and shouted in a voice laden with menace:

"Monster, give me my child!"

She threw herself on her knees, and raising up her hands, cried the same words in tones which wrung my heart. Then she tore her hair and beat her breast, and abandoned herself to all the violences of extravagant emotion. Finally, she threw herself forward, and, though I could not see her, I could hear the beating of her naked hands against the door.

Somewhere high overhead, probably on the tower, I heard the voice of the Count calling in his harsh, metallic whisper. His call seemed to be answered from far and wide by the howling of wolves. Before many minutes had passed, a pack of them poured, like a pent-up dam when

liberated, through the wide entrance into the courtyard.

There was no cry from the woman, and the howling of the wolves was but short. Before long they streamed away singly, licking their lips.

I could not pity her, for I knew now what had become of her child, and she was better dead.

What shall I do? What can I do? How can I escape from this dreadful thrall of night and gloom and fear?

JUNE 25, morning.—No man knows till he has suffered from the night how sweet and how dear to his heart and eye the morning can be. When the sun grew so high this morning that it struck the top of the great gateway opposite my window, the high spot which it touched seemed to me as if the dove from the ark had lighted there. My fear fell from me as if it had been a vaporous garment which dissolved in the warmth. I must take action of some sort while the courage of the day is upon me. Last night one of my post-dated letters went to post, the first of that fatal series which is to blot out the very traces of my existence from the earth.

Let me not think of it. Action!

It has always been at night-time that I have been molested or threatened, or in some way in danger or in fear. I have not yet seen the Count in the daylight. Can it be that he sleeps when others wake, that he may be awake whilst they sleep? If I could only get into his room! But there is no possible way. The door is always locked; no way for me.

Yes, there is a way, if one dares to take it. Where his body has gone why may not another body go? I have seen him myself crawl from his window; why should not I imitate him, and go in by his window? The chances are desperate, but my need is more desperate still. I shall risk it. At the worst it can only be death; and a man's death is not a calf's, and the dreaded Hereafter may still be open to me. God help me in my task! Good-bye, Mina, if I fail; good-bye, my faithful friend and second father; good-bye, all, and last of all, Mina!

Same day, later.—I have made the effort, and, God helping me, have come safely back to this room. I must put down every detail in order. I went, whilst my courage was fresh, straight to the window on the south side, and at once got outside on the narrow ledge of stone which runs round the building on this side. The stones were big and roughly cut, and the mortar had by process of time been washed away between them. I took off my boots, and ventured out on the desperate way. I looked down once, so as to make sure that a sudden glimpse of the awful depth would not overcome me, but after that kept my eyes away from it. I knew pretty well the direction and distance of the Count's window, and made for it as well as I could, having regard to the opportunities available. I did not feel dizzy—I suppose I was too excited—and the time seemed ridiculously short till I found myself standing on the window-sill and trying to raise up the sash. I was filled with agitation, however, when I bent down and slid feet foremost in through the window. Then I looked around for the Count, but, with surprise and gladness, made a discovery. The room was empty! It was barely furnished with odd things, which seemed to have never been used; the furniture was something the same style as that in the south rooms, and was covered with dust. I looked for the key, but it was not in the lock, and I could not find it anywhere. The only thing I found was a great heap of gold in one corner—gold of all kinds, Roman, and British, and Austrian, and Hungarian, and Greek and Turkish money, covered with a film of dust, as though it had lain long in the ground. None of it that I noticed was less than three hundred years old. There were also chains and ornaments, some jewelled, but all of them old and stained.

At one corner of the room was a heavy door. I tried it, for, since I could not find the key of the room or the key of the outer door, which was the main object of my search, I must make further examination, or all my efforts would be in vain. It was open, and led through a stone passage to a circular stairway, which went steeply down. I descended, minding carefully where I went, for the stairs were dark, being only lit by loopholes in the heavy masonry. At the bottom there was a dark, tunnel-like passage, through which came a deathly, sickly odour, the odour of old earth newly turned. As I went through the passage the smell grew closer and heavier. At last I pulled open a heavy door which stood ajar, and found myself in an old, ruined chapel, which had evidently been used as a graveyard. The roof was broken, and in two places were steps leading to vaults, but the ground had recently been dug over, and the earth placed in great wooden boxes, manifestly those which had been brought by the Slovaks. There was nobody about, and I made search for any further outlet, but there was none. Then I went over every inch of the ground, so as not to lose a chance. I went down even into the vaults, where the dim light struggled, although to do so was a dread to my very soul. Into two of these I went, but saw nothing except fragments of old coffins and piles of dust; in the third, however, I made a discovery.

There, in one of the great boxes, of which there were fifty in all, on a pile of newly dug earth, lay the Count! He was either dead or asleep, I could not say which—for the eyes were open and stony, but without the glassiness of death—and the cheeks had the warmth of life through all their pallor, and the lips were as red as ever. But there was no sign of movement, no pulse, no breath, no beating of the heart. I bent over him, and tried to find any sign of life, but in vain. He could not have lain there long, for the earthy smell would have passed away in a few hours. By the side of the box was its cover, pierced with holes here and there. I thought he might have the keys on him, but when I went to search I saw the dead eyes, and in them, dead though they were, such a look of hate, though unconscious of me or my presence, that I fled from the place, and leaving the Count's room by the window, crawled again up the castle wall. Regaining my own chamber, I threw myself panting upon the bed and tried to think. . . .

JUNE 29.—To-day is the date of my last letter, and the Count has taken steps to prove that it was genuine, for again I saw him leave the castle by the same window, and in my clothes. As he

went down the wall, lizard fashion, I wished I had a gun or some lethal weapon, that I might destroy him ; but I fear that no weapon wrought alone by man's hand would have any effect on him. I dared not wait to see him return, for I feared to see those weird sisters. I came back to the library, and read there till I fell asleep.

I was awakened by the Count, who looked at me as grimly as a man can look as he said :

" To-morrow, my friend, we must part. You return to your beautiful England, I to some work which may have such an end that we may never meet. Your letter home has been despatched ; to-morrow I shall not be here, but all shall be ready for your journey. In the morning come the Szgany, who have some labours of their own here, and also come some Slovaks. When they have gone, my carriage shall come for you, and shall bear you to the Borgo Pass to meet the diligence from Bukovina to Bistritz. But I am in hopes that I shall see more of you at Castle Dracula." I suspected him, and determined to test his sincerity. Sincerity ! It seems like a profanation of the word to write it in connexion with such a monster, so I asked him point-blank :

" Why may I not go to-night ? "

" Because, dear sir, my coachman and horses are away on a mission."

" But I would walk with pleasure. I want to get away at once." He smiled, such a soft, smooth, diabolical smile that I knew there was some trick behind his smoothness. He said :

" And your baggage ? "

" I do not care about it. I can send for it some other time."

The Count stood up, and said, with a sweet courtesy which made me rub my eyes, it seemed so real :

" You English have a saying which is close to my heart, for its spirit is that which rules our *boyars* : ' Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.' Come with me, my dear young friend. Not an hour shall you wait in my house against your will, though sad am I at your going, and that you so suddenly desire it. Come ! " With a stately gravity he, with the lamp, preceded me down the stairs and along the hall. Suddenly he stopped.

" Hark ! "

Close at hand came the howling of many wolves. It was almost as if the sound sprang up at the raising of his hand, just as the music of a great orchestra seems to leap under the baton of the conductor. After a pause of a moment, he proceeded, in his stately way, to the door, drew back the ponderous bolts, unhooked the heavy chains, and began to draw it open.

To my intense astonishment I saw that it was unlocked. Suspiciously I looked all round, but could see no key of any kind.

As the door began to open, the howling of the wolves without grew louder and angrier ; their red jaws, with champing teeth, and their blunt-clawed feet as they leaped, came in through the opening door. I knew that to struggle at the moment against the Count was useless. With such allies as these at his command, I could do nothing. But still the door continued slowly to open, and only the Count's body stood in the gap. Suddenly it struck me that this might be the moment and the means of my doom ; I was to be given to the wolves, and at my own instigation. There was a diabolical wickedness in the idea great enough for the Count, and as a last chance I cried out :

" Shut the door ; I shall wait till morning ! " and covered my face with my hands to hide my tears of bitter disappointment. With one sweep of his powerful arm, the Count threw the door shut, and the great bolts clanged and echoed through the hall as they shot back into their places.

In silence we returned to the library, and after a minute or two I went to my own room. The last I saw of Count Dracula was his kissing his hand to me ; with a red light of triumph in his eyes, and with a smile that Judas in hell might be proud of.

When I was in my room and about to lie down, I thought I heard a whispering at my door. I went to it softly and listened. Unless my ears deceived me, I heard the voice of the Count :

" Back, back, to your own place ! Your time is not yet come. Wait. Have patience. To-morrow night, to-morrow night, is yours ! " There was a low, sweet ripple of laughter, and in a rage I threw open the door, and saw without the three terrible women licking their lips. As I appeared they all joined in a horrible laugh, and ran away.

I came back to my room and threw myself on my knees. Is it then so near the end ? To-morrow ! to-morrow ! Lord, help me, and those to whom I am dear !

JUNE 30, morning.—These may be the last words I ever write in this diary. I slept till just before the dawn, and when I woke threw myself on my knees, for I determined that if Death came he should find me ready.

At last I felt that subtle change in the air, and knew that the morning had come. Then came the welcome cock-crow, and I felt that I was safe. With a glad heart, I opened my door and ran down to the hall. I had seen that the door was unlocked, and now escape was before me. With hands that trembled with eagerness, I unhooked the chains and drew back the massive bolts.

But the door would not move. Despair seized me. I pulled, and pulled, at the door, and shook it till, massive as it was, it rattled in its casement. I could see the bolt shot. It had been locked after I left the Count.

Then a wild desire took me to obtain that key at any risk, and I determined then and there to scale the wall again and gain the Count's room. He might kill me, but death now seemed the happier choice of evils. Without a pause I rushed up to the east window, and scrambled down the wall, as before, into the Count's room. It was empty, but that was as I expected. I could not see a key anywhere, but the heap of gold remained. I went through the door in the corner and down the winding stair and along the dark passage to the old chapel. I knew now well enough where to find the monster I sought.

The great box was in the same place, close against the wall, but the lid was laid on it, not fastened down, but with the nails ready in their place to be hammered home. I knew I must search the body for the key, so I raised

the lid, and laid it back against the wall; and then I saw something which filled my very soul with horror. There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for the white hair and moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck. Even the deep, burning eyes seemed set amongst swollen flesh, for the lids and pouches underneath were bloated. It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply gorged with blood; he lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. I shuddered as I bent over to touch him, and every sense in me revolted at the contact; but I had to search, or I was lost. The coming night might see my own body a banquet in a similar way to those horrid three. I felt all over the body, but no sign could I find of the key. Then I stopped and looked at the Count. There was a mocking smile on the bloated face which seemed to drive me mad. This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. The very thought drove me mad. A terrible desire came upon me to rid the world of such a monster. There was no lethal weapon at hand, but I seized a shovel which the workmen had been using to fill the cases, and lifting it high struck, with the edge downward, at the hateful face. But as I did so the head turned, and the eyes fell full upon me, with all their blaze of basilisk horror. The sight seemed to paralyse me, and the shovel turned in my hand and glanced from the face, merely making a deep gash above the forehead. The shovel fell from my hand across the box, and as I pulled it away the flange of the blade caught the edge of the lid, which fell over again, and hid the horrid thing from my sight. The last glimpse I had was of the bloated face, bloodstained and fixed with a grin of malice which would have held its own in the nethermost hell.

I thought and thought what should be my next move, but my brain seemed on fire, and I waited with a despairing feeling growing over me. As I waited I heard in the distance a gipsy song sung by merry voices coming closer, and through their song the rolling of heavy wheels and the cracking of whips; the Szgany and the Slovaks of whom the Count had spoken were coming. With a last look around and at the box which contained the vile body, I ran from the place and gained the Count's room, determined to rush out at the moment the door should be opened. With strained ears I listened, and heard downstairs the grinding of the key in the great lock and the falling back of the heavy door. There must have been some other means of entry, or some one had a key for one of the locked doors. Then there came the sound of many feet tramping and dying away in some passage which sent up a clanging echo. I turned to run down again towards the vault, where I might find the new entrance; but at that moment there seemed to come a violent puff of wind, and the door to the winding stair blew to with a shock that set the dust from the lintels flying. When I ran to push it open, I found that it was hopelessly fast. I was again a prisoner, and the net of doom was closing around me more closely.

As I write there is in the passage below a sound of many tramping feet and the crash of weights being set down heavily, doubtless the boxes, with their freight of earth. There is a sound of hammering; it is the box being nailed down. Now I can hear the heavy feet tramping again along the hall, with many other idle feet coming behind them.

The door is shut, and the chains rattle; there is a grinding of the key in the lock; I can hear the key withdrawn: then another door opens and shuts; I hear the creaking of lock and bolt.

Hark! in the courtyard and down the rocky way the roll of heavy wheels, the crack of whips, and the chorus of the Szgany as they pass into the distance.

I am alone in the castle with those awful women. Faugh! Mina is a woman, and there is naught in common. They are devils of the Pit!

I shall not remain alone with them; I shall try to scale the castle wall farther than I have yet attempted. I shall take some of the gold with me, lest I want it later. I may find a way from this dreadful place.

And then away for home! away to the quickest and nearest train! away from this cursed spot, from this cursed land, where the devil and his children still walk with earthly feet!

At least God's mercy is better than that of these monsters, and the precipice is steep and high. At its foot a man may sleep—as a man. Good-bye, all! Mina!

CHAPTER V

Letter from Miss Mina Murray to Miss Lucy Westenra

"9 *May*

"MY dearest Lucy,—

"Forgive my long delay in writing, but I have been simply overwhelmed with work. The life of an assistant schoolmistress is sometimes trying. I am longing to be with you, and by the sea, where we can talk together freely and build our castles in the air. I have been working very hard lately, because I want to keep up with Jonathan's studies, and I have been practising shorthand very assiduously. When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan, and if I can stenograph well enough I can take down what he wants to say in this way and write it out for him on the typewriter, at which also I am practising very hard. He and I sometimes write letters in shorthand, and he is keeping a stenographic journal of his travels abroad. When I am with you I shall keep a diary in the same way. I don't mean one of those two-pages-to-the-week-with-Sunday-squeezed-in-a-corner diaries, but a sort of journal which I can write in whenever I feel inclined. I do not suppose there will be much of interest to other people; but it is not intended for them. I may show it to Jonathan some day if there is in it anything worth sharing, but it

is really an exercise book. I shall try to do what I see lady journalists do: interviewing and writing descriptions and trying to remember conversations. I am told that, with a little practice, one can remember all that goes on or that one hears said during a day. However, we shall see. I shall tell you all my little plans when we meet. I have just had a few hurried lines from Jonathan from Transylvania. He is well, and will be returning in about a week. I am longing to hear all his news. It must be so nice to see strange countries. I wonder if we—I mean Jonathan and I—shall ever see them together. There is the ten o'clock bell ringing. Good-bye. "Your loving

"MINA.

"Tell me all the news when you write. You have not told me anything for a long time. I hear rumours, and especially of a tall, handsome, curly-haired man? ? ?"

Letter, Lucy Westenra to Mina Murray.

"17 *Chatham Street,*

"*Wednesday.*

"My dearest Mina,—

"I must say you tax me *very* unfairly with being a bad correspondent. I wrote to you *twice* since we parted, and your last letter was only your *second*. Besides, I have nothing to tell you. There is really nothing to interest you. Town is very pleasant just now, and we go a good deal to picture-galleries and for walks and rides in the park. As to the tall, curly-haired man, I suppose it was the one who was with me at the last Pop. Some one has evidently been telling tales. That was Mr. Holmwood. He often comes to see us, and he and mamma get on very well together; they have so many things to talk about in common. We met some time ago a man that would just *do for you*, if you were not already engaged to Jonathan. He is an excellent *parti*, being handsome, well off, and of good birth. He is a doctor and really clever. Just fancy! He is only nine-and-twenty, and he has an immense lunatic asylum all under his own care. Mr. Holmwood introduced him to me, and he called here to see us, and often comes now. I think he is one of the most resolute men I ever saw, and yet the most calm. He seems absolutely imperturbable. I can fancy what a wonderful power he must have over his patients. He has a curious habit of looking one straight in the face, as if trying to read one's thoughts. He tries this on very much with me, but I flatter myself he has got a tough nut to crack. I know that from my glass. Do you ever try to read your own face? *I do*, and I can tell you it is not a bad study, and gives you more trouble than you can well fancy if you have never tried it. He says that I afford him a curious psychological study, and I humbly think I do. I do not, as you know, take sufficient interest in dress to be able to describe the new fashions. Dress is a bore. That is slang again, but never mind; Arthur says that every day. There, it is all out. Mina, we have told all our secrets to each other since we were *children*; we have slept together and eaten together, and laughed and cried together; and now, though I have spoken, I would like to speak more. Oh, Mina, couldn't you guess? I love him. I am blushing as I write, for although I *think* he loves me, he has not told me so in words. But oh, Mina, I love him; I love him; I love him! There, that does me good. I wish I were with you, dear, sitting by the fire undressing, as we used to sit; and I would try to tell you what I feel. I do not know how I am writing this even to you. I am afraid to stop, or I should tear up the letter, and I don't want to stop, for I *do so* want to tell you all. Let me hear from you *at once*, and tell me all that you think about it. Mina, I must stop. Good-night. Bless me in your prayers; and, Mina, pray for my happiness.

"LUCY.

"P.S.—I need not tell you this is a secret. Good-night again. "L."

Letter, Lucy Westenra to Mina Murray

"24 *May.*

"My dearest Mina,—

"Thanks, and thanks, and thanks again for your sweet letter! It was so nice to be able to tell you and to have your sympathy.

"My dear, it never rains but it pours. How true the old proverbs are. Here am I, who will be twenty in September, and yet I never had a proposal till to-day, not a real proposal, and to-day I have had three. Just fancy! THREE proposals in one day! Isn't it awful! I feel sorry, really and truly sorry, for two of the poor fellows. Oh, Mina, I am so happy that I don't know what to do with myself. And three proposals! But, for goodness' sake, don't tell any of the girls, or they would be getting all sorts of extravagant ideas and imagining themselves injured and slighted if in their very first day at home they did not get six at least. Some girls are so vain. You and I, Mina dear, who are engaged and are going to settle down soon soberly into old married women, can despise vanity. Well, I must tell you about the three, but you must keep it a secret, dear, from *every one*, except, of course, Jonathan. You will tell him, because I would, if I were in your place, certainly tell Arthur. A woman ought to tell her husband everything—don't you think so, dear?—and I must be fair. Men like women, certainly their wives, to be quite as fair as they are; and women, I am afraid, are not always quite as fair as they should be. Well, my dear, number one came just before lunch. I told you of him, Dr. John Seward, the lunatic-asylum man, with the strong jaw and the good forehead. He was very cool outwardly, but was nervous all the same. He had evidently been schooling himself as to all sorts of little things, and remembered them; but he almost managed to sit down on his silk hat, which men don't generally do when they are cool, and then when he wanted to appear at ease he kept playing with a lancet in a way that made me nearly scream. He spoke to me, Mina, very straightforwardly. He told me how dear I was to him, though he had known me so little, and what his life would be with me to help and cheer him. He was going to tell me how unhappy he would be if I did not care for him, but when he saw me cry he said that he was a brute and would not add to my present trouble. Then he broke off and asked if I could love him in time; and when I shook my head his hands trembled, and then with some hesi-

tation he asked me if I cared already for any one else. He put it very nicely, saying that he did not want to wring my confidence from me, but only to know, because if a woman's heart was free a man might have hope. And then, Mina, I felt it a sort of duty to tell him that there was some one. I only told him that much, and then he stood up, and he looked very strong and very grave as he took both my hands in his and said he hoped I would be happy, and that if I ever wanted a friend I must count him one of my best. Oh, Mina dear, I can't help crying; and you must excuse this letter being all blotted. Being proposed to is all very nice and all that sort of thing, but it isn't at all a happy thing when you have to see a poor fellow, whom you know loves you honestly, going away and looking all broken-hearted, and to know that, no matter what he may say at the moment, you are passing quite out of his life. My dear, I must stop here at present, I feel so miserable, though I am so happy.

" *Evening.*

" Arthur has just gone, and I feel in better spirits than when I left off, so I can go on telling you about the day. Well, my dear, number two came after lunch. He is such a nice fellow, an American from Texas, and he looks so young and so fresh that it seems almost impossible that he has been to so many places and has had such adventures. I sympathise with poor Desdemona when she had such a dangerous stream poured in her ear, even by a black man. I suppose that we women are such cowards that we think a man will save us from fears, and we marry him. I know now what I would do if I were a man and wanted to make a girl love me. No, I don't, for there was Mr. Morris telling us his stories, and Arthur never told any, and yet— My dear, I am somewhat previous. Mr. Quincy P. Morris found me alone. It seems that a man always does find a girl alone. No, he doesn't, for Arthur tried twice to *make* a chance, and I helping him all I could; I am not ashamed to say it now. I must tell you beforehand that Mr. Morris doesn't always speak slang—that is to say, he never does so to strangers or before them, for he is really well educated and has exquisite manners—but he found out that it amused me to hear him talk American slang, and whenever I was present, and there was no one to be shocked, he said such funny things. I am afraid, my dear, he has to invent it all, for it fits exactly into whatever else he has to say. But this is a way slang has. I do not know myself if I shall ever speak slang; I do not know if Arthur likes it, as I have never heard him use any as yet. Well, Mr. Morris sat down beside me and looked as happy and jolly as he could, but I could see all the same that he was very nervous. He took my hand in his, and said ever so sweetly :—

" ' Miss Lucy, I know I ain't good enough to regulate the fixin's of your little shoes, but I guess if you wait till you find a man that is you will go join them seven young women with the lamps when you quit. Won't you just hitch up alongside of me and let us go down the long road together driving in double harness ? '

" Well, he did look so good-humoured and so jolly that it didn't seem half so hard to refuse him as it did poor Dr. Seward, so I said, as lightly as I could, that I did not know anything of hitching, and that I wasn't broken to harness at all yet. Then he said that he had spoken in a light manner, and he hoped that if he had made a mistake in doing so on so grave, so momentous, an occasion for him, I would forgive him. He really did look serious when he was saying it, and I couldn't help feeling a bit serious too. I know, Mina, you will think me a horrid flirt—though I couldn't help feeling a sort of exultation that he was number two in one day. And then, my dear, before I could say a word he began pouring out a perfect torrent of love-making, laying his very heart and soul at my feet. He looked so earnest over it that I shall never again think that a man must be playful always, and never in earnest, because he is merry at times. I suppose he saw something in my face which checked him, for he suddenly stopped, and said with a sort of manly fervour that I could have loved him for if I had been free :—

" ' Lucy, you are an honest-hearted girl, I know. I should not be here speaking to you as I am now if I did not believe you clean grit, right through to the very depths of your soul. Tell me, like one good fellow to another, is there any one else that you care for ? And if there is I'll never trouble you a hair's breadth again, but will be, if you will let me, a very faithful friend ? '

" My dear Mina, why are men so noble when we women are so little worthy of them ? Here was I almost making fun of this great-hearted, true gentleman. I burst into tears—I am afraid, my dear, you will think this a very sloppy letter in more ways than one—and I really felt very badly. Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble ? But this is heresy, and I must not say it. I am glad to say that, though I was crying, I was able to look into Mr. Morris's brave eyes, and I told him out straight :—

" ' Yes, there is some one I love, though he has not told me yet that he even loves me.' I was right to speak to him so frankly, for quite a light came into his face, and he put out both his hands and took mine—I think I put them into his—and said in a hearty way :—

" ' That's my brave girl. It's better worth being late for a chance of winning you than being in time for any other girl in the world. Don't cry, my dear. If it's for me, I'm a hard nut to crack; and I take it standing up. If that other fellow doesn't know his happiness, well, he'd better look for it soon, or he'll have to deal with me. Little girl, your honesty and pluck have made me a friend, and that's rarer than a lover; it's more unselfish anyhow. My dear, I'm going to have a pretty lonely walk between this and Kingdom Come. Won't you give me one kiss ? It'll be something to keep off the darkness now and then. You can, you know, if you like, for that other good fellow—he must be a good fellow, my dear, and a fine fellow, or you could not love him—hasn't spoken yet.' That quite won me, Mina, for it *was* brave and sweet of him, and noble, too, to a rival—wasn't it ?—and he so sad; so I leant over and kissed him. He stood up with my two hands in his,

and as he looked down into my face—I am afraid I was blushing very much—he said :—

" ' Little girl, I hold your hand, and you've kissed me, and if these things don't make us friends nothing ever will. Thank you for your sweet honesty to me, and good-bye.' He wrung my hand, and taking up his hat, went straight out of the room without looking back, without a tear or a quiver or a pause ; and I am crying like a baby. Oh, why must a man like that be made unhappy when there are lots of girls about who would worship the very ground he trod on ? I know I would if I were free—only I don't want to be free. My dear, this quite upset me, and I feel I cannot write of happiness just at once, after telling you of it ; and I don't wish to tell of the number three till it can be all happy.—Ever your loving

" Lucy.

" P.S.—Oh, about number three—I needn't tell you of number three, need I ? Besides, it was all so confused ; it seemed only a moment from his coming into the room till both his arms were round me, and he was kissing me. I am very, very happy, and I don't know what I have done to deserve it. I must only try in future to show that I am not ungrateful for all His goodness to me in sending to me such a lover, such a husband, and such a friend.

" Good-bye."

Dr. Seward's Diary

(Kept in phonograph)

April 25.—Ebb tide in appetite to-day. Cannot eat, cannot rest, so diary instead. Since my rebuff of yesterday I have a sort of empty feeling ; nothing in the world seems of sufficient importance to be worth the doing. . . . As I knew that the only cure for this sort of thing was work, I went down amongst the patients. I picked out one who has afforded me a study of much interest. He is so quaint in his ideas, and so unlike the normal lunatic, that I have determined to understand him as well as I can. To-day I seemed to get nearer than ever before to the heart of his mystery.

I questioned him more fully than I had ever done, with a view to making myself master of the facts of his hallucination. In my manner of doing it there was, I now see, something of cruelty. I seemed to wish to keep him to the point of his madness—a thing which I avoid with the patients as I would the mouth of hell. (*Mem.*, under what circumstances would I *not* avoid the pit of hell ?) *Omnia Romæ venalia sunt.* Hell has its price ! *verb. sap.* If there be anything behind this instinct it will be valuable to trace it afterwards *accurately*, so I had better commence to do so, therefore—

R. M. Renfield, ætat. 59—Sanguine temperament ; great physical strength ; morbidly excitable ; periods of gloom ending in some fixed idea which I cannot make out. I presume that the sanguine temperament itself and the disturbing influence end in a mentally-accomplished finish ; a possibly dangerous man, probably dangerous if unselfish. In selfish men caution is as secure an armour for their foes as for themselves. What I think of on this point is, when self is the fixed point the centripetal force is balanced with the centrifugal ; when duty, a cause, etc., is the fixed point, the latter force is paramount, and only accident or a series of accidents can balance it.

Letter, Quincey P. Morris to Hon. Arthur Holmwood

" *25 May.*

" My dear Art,—

" We've told yarns by the camp-fire in the prairies ; and dressed one another's wounds after trying a landing at the Marquesas ; and drunk healths on the shore of Titicaca. There are more yarns to be told, and other wounds to be healed, and another health to be drunk. Won't you let this be at my camp-fire to-morrow night ? I have no hesitation in asking you, as I know a certain lady is engaged to a certain dinner-party, and that you are free. There will only be one other, our old pal at the Korea, Jack Seward. He's coming, too, and we both want to mingle our weeps over the wine-cup, and to drink a health with all our hearts to the happiest man in all the wide world, who has won the noblest heart that God has made and the best worth winning. We promise you a hearty welcome, and a loving greeting, and a health as true as your own right hand. We shall both swear to leave you at home if you drink too deep to a certain pair of eyes. Come !

" Yours, as ever and always,

" Quincey P. Morris."

Telegram from Arthur Hopwood to Quincey P. Morris

" *26 May.*

" Count me in every time. I bear messages which will make both your ears tingle.

" Art."

CHAPTER VI

Mina Murray's Journal

JULY 24. Whitby.—Lucy met me at the station, looking sweeter and lovelier than ever, and we drove up to the house at the Crescent in which they have rooms. This is a lovely place. The little river, the Esk, runs through a deep valley, which broadens out as it comes near the harbour. A great viaduct runs across, with high piers, through which the view seems somehow further away than it really is. The valley is beautifully green, and it is so steep that when you are on the high land on either side you look right across it, unless you are near enough to see down. The houses of the old town—the side away from us—are all red-roofed, and seem piled up one over the other anyhow, like the pictures we see of Nuremberg. Right over the town is the ruin of Whitby Abbey, which was sacked by the Danes, and which is the scene of part of " Marmion," where the girl was built up in the wall. It is a most noble ruin, of immense size, and full of beautiful and romantic bits ; there is a legend that a white lady is seen in one of the windows. Between it and the town there is another church, the parish one, round which is a big graveyard, all full of tombstones. This is to my mind the nicest spot in Whitby, for it lies right over the town, and has a full view of the harbour and all

up the bay to where the headland called Kettleness stretches out into the sea. It descends so steeply over the harbour that part of the bank has fallen away, and some of the graves have been destroyed. In one place part of the stonework of the graves stretches out over the sandy pathway far below. There are walks, with seats beside them, through the churchyard; and people go and sit there all day long looking at the beautiful view and enjoying the breeze. I shall come and sit here very often myself and work. Indeed, I am writing now, with my book on my knee, and listening to the talk of three old men who are sitting beside me. They seem to do nothing all day but sit up here and talk.

The harbour lies below me, with, on the far side, one long granite wall stretching out into the sea, with a curve outwards at the end of it, in the middle of which is a lighthouse. A heavy sea-wall runs along outside of it. On the near side, the sea-wall makes an elbow crooked inversely, and its end too has a lighthouse. Between the two piers there is a narrow opening into the harbour, which then suddenly widens.

It is nice at high tide; but when the tide is out it shoals away to nothing, and there is merely the stream of the Esk, running between banks of sand, with rocks here and there. Outside the harbour on this side there rises for about half a mile a great reef, the sharp edge of which runs straight out from behind the south lighthouse. At the end of it is a buoy with a bell, which swings in bad weather, and sends in a mournful sound on the wind. They have a legend here that when a ship is lost bells are heard out at sea. I must ask the old man about this; he is coming this way. . . .

He is a funny old man. He must be awfully old, for his face is all gnarled and twisted like the bark of a tree. He tells me that he is nearly a hundred, and that he was a sailor in the Greenland fishing fleet when Waterloo was fought. He is, I am afraid, a very sceptical person, for when I asked him about the bells at sea and the White Lady at the abbey he said very brusquely:—

"I wouldn't fash masel' about them, miss. Them things be all wore out. Mind, I don't say that they never was, but I do say that they wasn't in my time. They be all very well for comers and trippers an' the like, but not for a nice young lady like you. Them feet-folks from York and Leeds that be always eatin' cured herrin's an' drinkin' tea an' lookin' out to buy cheap jet would creed aught. I wonder masel' who'd be bothered tellin' lies to them—even the newspapers, which is full of fool-talk." I thought he would be a good person to learn interesting things from, so I asked him if he would mind telling me something about whale-fishing in the old days. He was just settling himself to begin when the clock struck six, whereupon he laboured to get up, and said:

"I must gang ageeanwards home now, miss. My granddaughter doesn't like to be kept waitin' when the tea is ready, for it takes me time to crammle aboon the grees, for there be a many of 'em; an' miss, I lack belly-timber sairly by the clock."

He hobbled away, and I could see him hurrying, as well as he could, down the steps. The steps are a great feature of the place. They lead from the town up to the church; there are hundreds of them—I do not know how many—and they wind up in a delicate curve; the slope is so gentle that a horse could easily walk up and down them. I think they must originally have had something to do with the Abbey. I shall go home too. Lucy went out visiting with her mother, and as they were only duty calls, I did not go. They will be home by this.

AUGUST 1.—I came up here an hour ago with Lucy, and we had a most interesting talk with my old friend and the two others who always come and join him. He is evidently the Sir Oracle of them, and I should think must have been in his time a most dictatorial person. He will not admit anything, and downfaces everybody. If he can't out-argue them he bullies them, and then takes their silence for agreement with his views. Lucy was looking sweetly pretty in her white lawn frock; she has got a beautiful colour since she has been here. I noticed that the old men did not lose any time in coming up and sitting near her when we sat down. She is so sweet with old people; I think they all fell in love with her on the spot. Even my old man succumbed and did not contradict her, but gave me double share instead. I got him on the subject of the legends, and he went off at once into a sort of sermon. I must try to remember it and put it down:—

"It be all fool-talk, lock, stock, and barrel; that's what it be, an' nowt else. These bans an' wafts an' boh-ghosts an' bar-guests and bogles an' all anent them is only fit to set bairns an' dizzy women a-belderin'. They be nowt but air-blebs! They, an' all grims an' signs an' warnin's, be all invented by parsons an' illsome, beukbodies an' railway touters to skeer an' scunner hafflin's, an' to get folks to do somethin' that they don't other incline to. It makes me ireful to think o' them. Why, it's them that, not content with printin' lies on paper an' preachin' them out of pulpits, does want to be cuttin' them on the tombstones. Look here all round you in what airt ye will; all them steans, holdin' up their heads as well as they can out of their pride, is acant—simply tumblin' down with the weight o' the lies wrote on them, 'Here lies the body' or 'Sacred to the memory' wrote on all of them, an' yet in nigh half of them there bean't no bodies at all; an' the memories of them bean't cared a pinch of snuff about, much less sacred. Lies all of them, nothin'. but lies of one kind or another! My gog, but it'll be a quare scowderment at the Day of Judgment when they come tumblin' up here in their deathsarks, all jouped together an' tryin' to drag their tombsteans with them to prove how good they was; some of them trimmlin' and ditherin', with their hands that dozzened an' slippy from lyin' in the sea that they can't even keep their grup o' them."

I could see from the old fellow's self-satisfied air and the way in which he looked round for the approval of his cronies that he was "showing off," so I put in a word to keep him going:—

"Oh, Mr. Swales, you can't be serious. Surely these tombstones are not all wrong?"

"Yabblins! There may be a poorish few not wrong, savin' where they make out the people too good; for there be folk that do think a balm-bowl be like the sea, if only it be their own.

The whole thing be only lies. Now look you here ; you come here a stranger, an' you see this kirk-garth." I nodded, for I thought it better to assent, though I did not quite understand his dialect. I knew it had something to do with the church. He went on : " And you consate that all these steans be aboon folk that be happed here, snod an' snog ? " I assented again. " Then that be just where the lie comes in. Why, there be scores of these lay-beds that be toom as old Dun's 'bacca-box on Friday night." He nudged one of his companions, and they all laughed. " And my gog ! how could they be otherwise ? Look at that one, the aftest abaft the bierbank ; read it ! " I went over and read :—

" Edward Spencelagh, master mariner, murdered by pirates off the coast of Andres, April 1854, æt. 30." When I came back Mr. Swales went on :—

" Who brought him home, I wonder, to hap him there ? Murdered off the coast of Andres ! an' you consated his body lay under ! Why, I could name ye a dozen whose bones lie in the Greenland seas above "—he pointed northwards —" or where the currents may have drifted them. There be the steans around ye. Ye can, with your young eyes, read the small print of the lies from here. This Braithwaite Lowrey—I knew his father, lost in the *Lively* off Greenland in '20 ; or Andrew Woodhouse, drowned in the same seas in 1777 ; or John Paxton, drowned off Cape Farewell a year later ; or old John Rawlings, whose grandfather sailed with me, drowned in the Gulf of Finland in '50. Do ye think that all these men will have to make a rush to Whitby when the trumpet sounds ? I have me antherums aboot it ! I tell ye that when they got here they'd be jommlin' an' jostlin' one another that way that it 'ud be like a fight up on the ice in the old days, when we'd be at one another from daylight to dark, an' tryin' to tie up our cuts by the light of the aurora borealis." This was evidently local pleasantry, for the old man cackled over it, and his cronies joined in with gusto.

" But," I said, "surely you are not quite correct, for you start on the assumption that all the poor people, or their spirits, will have to take their tombstones with them on the Day of Judgment. Do you think that will be really necessary ? "

" Well, what else be they tombsteans for ? Answer me that, miss ? "

" To please their relatives, I suppose."

" To please their relatives, you suppose ! " This he said with intense scorn. " How will it pleasure their relatives to know that lies is wrote over them, and that everybody in the place knows that they be lies ? " He pointed to a stone at our feet which had been laid down as a slab, on which the seat was rested, close to the edge of the cliff. " Read the lines on that thruff-stean," he said. The letters were upside down to me from where I sat, but Lucy was more opposite to them, so she leant over and read :—

" Sacred to the memory of George Canon, who died, in the hope of a glorious resurrection, on July 29, 1873, falling from the rocks at Kettleness. This tomb is erected by his sorrowing mother to her dearly beloved son. ' He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.' " . . . " Really, Mr. Swales, I don't see anything very funny in that ! " She spoke her comment very gravely and somewhat severely.

" Ye don't see aught funny ! Ha ! ha ! But that's because ye don't gawm the sorrowin' mother was a hell-cat that hated him because he was acrewk'd—a regular lamiter he was—an' he hated her so that he committed suicide in order that she mightn't get an insurance she put on his life. He blew nigh the top of his head off with an old musket that they had for scarin' the crows with. 'Twarn't for crows then, for it brought the clegs and the dowps to him. That's the way he fell off the rocks. And, as to hopes of a glorious resurrection, I've often heard him say masel' that he hoped he'd go to hell, for his mother was so pious that she'd be sure to go to heaven, an' he didn't wan't to addle where she was. Now isn't that stean at any rate "—he hammered it with his stick as he spoke—" a pack of lies ? and won't it make Gabriel keckle when Geordie comes pantin' up the grees with the tombstean balanced on his hump, and asks it to be took as evidence ! "

I did not know what to say, but Lucy turned the conversation as she said, rising up :—

" Oh, why did you tell us of this ? It is my favourite seat, and I cannot leave it; and now I find I must go on sitting over the grave of a suicide."

" That won't harm ye, my pretty ; an' it may make poor Geordie gladsome to have so trim a lass sittin' on his lap. That won't hurt ye. Why, I've sat here off an' on for nigh twenty years past, an' it hasn't done me no harm. Don't ye fash about them as lies under ye, or that doesn' lie there either ! It'll be time for ye to be getting scart when ye see the tombsteans all run away with, and the place as bare as a stubble-field. There's the clock, an' I must gang. My service to ye, ladies ! " And off he hobbled.

Lucy and I sat awhile, an it was all so beautiful before us that we took hands as we sat ; and she told me all over again about Arthur and their coming marriage. That made me just a little heart-sick, for I haven't heard from Jonathan for a whole month.

The same day.—I came up here alone, for I am very sad. There was no letter for me. I hope there cannot be anything the matter with Jonathan. The clock has just struck nine. I see the lights scattered all over the town, sometimes in rows where the streets are, and sometimes singly ; they run right up the Esk and die away in the curve of the valley. To my left the view is cut off by a black line of roof of the old house next the Abbey. The sheep and lambs are bleating in the fields away behind me, and there is a clatter of a donkey's hoofs up the paved road below. The band on the pier is playing a harsh waltz in good time, and farther along the quay there is a Salvation Army meeting in a back street. Neither of the bands hears the other, but up here I hear and see them both. I wonder where Jonathan is, and if he is thinking of me ! I wish he were here.

Dr. Seward's Diary

JUNE 5.—The case of Renfield grows more interesting the more I get to understand the man. He has certain qualities very largely

(*Continued on page 176*)

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developed: selfishness, secrecy, and purpose. I wish I could get at what is the object of the latter. He seems to have some settled scheme of his own, but what it is I do not yet know. His redeeming quality is a love of animals, though, indeed, he has such curious turns in it that I sometimes imagine he is only abnormally cruel. His pets are of odd sorts. Just now his hobby is catching flies. He has at present such a quantity that I have had myself to expostulate. To my astonishment, he did not break out into a fury, as I expected, but took the matter in simple seriousness. He thought for a moment, and then said: "May I have three days? I shall clear them away." Of course, I said that would do. I must watch him.

JUNE 18.—He has turned his mind now to spiders, and has got several very big fellows in a box. He keeps feeding them with his flies, and the number of the latter is becoming sensibly diminished, although he has used half his food in attracting more flies from outside to his room.

July 1.—His spiders are now becoming as great a nuisance as his flies, and to-day I told him that he must get rid of them. He looked very sad at this, so I said that he must clear out some of them, at all events. He cheerfully acquiesced in this, and I gave him the same time as before for reduction. He disgusted me much while with him, for when a horrid blow-fly, bloated with some carrion food, buzzed into the room, he caught it, held it exultantly for a few moments between his finger and thumb, and, before I knew what he was going to do, put it in his mouth and ate it. I scolded him for it, but he argued quietly that it was very good and very wholesome; that it was life, strong life, and gave life to him. This gave me an idea, or the rudiment of one. I must watch how he gets rid of his spiders. He has evidently some deep problem in his mind, for he keeps a little notebook in which he is always jotting down something. Whole pages of it are filled with masses of figures.

July 8.—There is a method in his madness, and the rudimentary idea in my mind is growing. It will be a whole idea soon, and then, oh, unconscious cerebration! you will have to give the wall to your conscious brother. I kept away from my friend for a few days, so that I might notice if there were any change. Things remain as they were except that he has parted with some of his pets and got a new one. He has managed to get a sparrow, and has already partially tamed it. His means of taming is simple, for already the spiders have diminished. Those that do remain, however, are well fed, for he still brings in the flies by tempting them with his food.

July 19.—We are progressing. My friend has now a whole colony of sparrows, and his flies and spiders are almost obliterated. When I came in he ran to me and said he wanted to ask me a great favour—a very, very great favour; and as he spoke he fawned on me like a dog. I asked him what it was, and he said, with a sort of rapture in his voice and bearing:—

"A kitten, a nice little, sleek, playful kitten, that I can play with, and teach, and feed—and feed—and feed!" I was not unprepared for this request, for I had noticed how his pets went on increasing in size and vivacity, but I did not care that his pretty family of tame sparrows should be wiped out in the same manner as the flies and the spiders; so I said I would see about it, and asked him if he would not rather have a cat than a kitten. His eagerness betrayed him as he answered:—

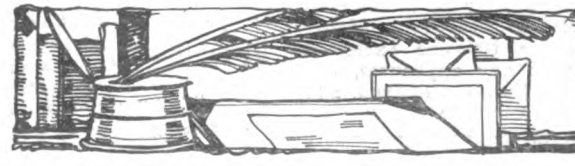
"Oh yes, I would like a cat! I only asked for a kitten lest you should refuse me a cat. No one would refuse me a kitten, would they?" I shook my head, and said that at present I feared it would not be possible, but that I would see about it. His face fell, and I could see a warning of danger in it, for there was a sudden fierce, sidelong look which meant killing.

10 *p.m.*—I have visited him again and found him sitting in a corner brooding. When I came in he threw himself on his knees before me and implored me to let him have a cat; that his salvation depended upon it. I was firm, however, and told him that he could not have it, whereupon he went without a word, and sat down, gnawing his finger, in the corner where I had found him. I shall see him in the morning early.

July 20.—Visited Renfield very early, before the attendant went his rounds. Found him up and humming a tune. He was spreading out his sugar, which he had saved, in the window, and was manifestly beginning his fly-catching again; and beginning it cheerfully and with a good grace. I looked around for his birds, and not seeing them, asked him where they were. He replied, without turning round, that they had all flown away. There were a few feathers about the room and on his pillow a drop of blood. I said nothing, but went and told the keeper to report to me if there were anything odd about him during the day.

11 *a.m.*—The attendant has just been to me to say that Renfield has been very sick and has disgorged a whole lot of feathers. "My belief is, doctor," he said, "that he has eaten his birds, and that he just took and ate them raw!"

(To be continued in next month's "Argosy.")



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The WORLD'S BEST STORIES

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The Young Man Who Stroked Cats

The romance of a strange present

By MORLEY ROBERTS

STORIES, like plants, do not begin: they grow, and what folks are apt to call their beginning is when they break the fertile earth and show themselves. So, in common parlance, Tom Meredith's story began what time a ragged youth came up the pathway to the front door and rang the bell, when Tom was at breakfast with his father and mother.

"A beggar, I fear," said Mr. Meredith.

"Rather cheeky to come to the front door," said Tom.

"I hope he isn't hungry," sighed his mother.

And the maid who opened the door was very lofty with the ragged youth.

"You should go to the back door," she said, with her nose in the air.

"I does what I'm paid for," retorted the ragged one. "Does Mr. Thomas Meredith live 'ere?"

He was carrying a basket, quite a dainty basket, and it was tied with pink ribbon. It caught the girl's eye just as she was prepared to say that her young master was not likely to see beggars at nine o'clock in the morning or, for that matter, at any time. It would have been untrue, but that would not have mattered.

"Is that for Mr. Meredith?" she asked.

"Yus. And it's a cat," said the young fellow, lifting the basket and peering in through the interstices.

"Who's it from?"

"I dunno. A young lidy give me a tanner to tike it to Mr. Thomas Meredith as lives 'ere. She p'inted out the 'ouse, and went away in a kerridge."

"If you'll wait a moment I'll speak to him," said the girl. She went to the breakfast-room.

"If you please, Mr. Thomas, there's someone says he has a cat for you," she announced.

"A cat for me? I've ordered no cat," said Tom. But no one would have been surprised if he had ordered one, for men are most properly divided into those who own dogs and those who are owned by cats, and it was notorious that Tom Meredith belonged to the smaller but more distinguished order.

"Oh no, sir," said the girl, "but the young man says that a lady in a carriage gave it to him and paid him to bring it here."

"How odd," said Tom's mother, eyeing him anxiously. So far she had had no reason to do so.

"Very odd," said his father. "Bring the cat in, Jones."

"And tell the man to wait," said Tom.

He knew no girl likely to present him with a cat, or with anything else for that matter. It was not that he despised girls, but he was very busy, and keeping romance deep in his heart he found them nowadays very unromantic.

Jones brought in the basket, and, as she entered, there rose from it a pitiful wail. Tom got up, took it from her, and putting it on the table opened it. There instantly climbed into view a wild-eyed Persian kitten, little more than a month old. It was the colour of Chinchilla, and probably, as Tom knew, of high lineage. So far as one could tell its points at that age it was perfect.

"Humph," said Tom's father.

"Very rummy," said Tom.

"Give it some milk," said his mother, and while the two elders watched it lap, Tom went to the hall door.

"Who gave you this kitten?" he asked.

"A young lidy in a kerridge says to me, says she, 'Do yer warnt to earn a tanner,' and I says, says I, 'Oh, it ain't likely, is it, miss, and what do you think?' And wiv that she gives me the basket and a tanner and says, 'Tike this to number 10 and say it's for Mr. Thomas Meredith.' And as I opened your gyte she drives off."

"What was she like?" asked Tom.

"Pretty, but very pile," said the youth, shaking his head. "And it was a one-'orse kerridge, and there was a nuss with 'er."

"A nuss?" asked Tom.

"In uniform," said the youth.

"Here's a shilling for you," said Tom.

"Blimy, but you're a gent," said the ragged one. And as he went away he put the shilling and the sixpence on his hand and looked at them with his head sideways all the way down the path. And Tom went back to breakfast.

"There was something in the basket, Tom," said his mother.

"What?" asked her son.

She gave him a plain card. On it was written in a round hand, "For the Young Man who Strokes Cats."

"You don't know who it is, Tom?"

"Haven't the least notion," said Tom, with perfect honesty.

"You found out nothing from the boy?" asked his father; "didn't he know her name?"

"No," said Tom.

"Somebody has fallen in love with you at last, Tom," said his father.

"I dare say it is some old lady who has noticed you always speak to cats," suggested his mother.

"A very silly habit," said his father.

"But this one is too sweet," said his mother. They sat down and watched the baby Persian finish his milk. When it was done he looked up at them and finally walked straight to Tom.

"I shall call it Korban," said Tom. For Korban means, "It is a gift."

And Korban climbed up his coat and lay on his shoulder, purring feebly. There was a far-off look in his new master's eyes, and his mother knew that he was wondering who the giver might be, and her heart was a little hostile to the stranger, as all mothers' hearts are.

Tom was twenty-four, and there was perhaps no young fellow in Kensington who had been less troubled by love. In spite of his passion for cats, which are properly indoor or domestic deities, he was essentially an outdoor man, so far as the City permitted him to be, and spending all his spare time on the river or some golf course, he gave small attention to those who might have smiled on him. And yet the time now came when spring and youth and the thought of love came altogether. As the gift of the Unknown purred on his shoulder, his heart was moved. For the unknown is the land of romance always. He knew that he was found pleasing in the eyes of a stranger, and he flushed a little to think of it. There is no more wonderful or disturbing thing to youth.

So days went by, and the others in the house forgot how it was that Korban came to be theirs. But Tom did not forget, and when he came home tired he often sent for Korban, who grew quickly and was exceedingly agile and very round and furry, and every day more obviously of high lineage.

"Who sent you to me, Korban?" he asked, as Korban pursued his own tail, or rolled over, or walked sideways loftily, or spat at some other imaginary kitten evolved from his inner consciousness. "I wonder who she is."

The pretty pale young lady, reported by love's ragged messenger, assumed many shapes in his waking thoughts, and sometimes in his dreams. But though the spring was in his heart she could not endure, and when Korban was a month old, began to fade from his thoughts. Yet he was still

the Young Man who Stroked Cats on his way to the City. He was acquainted with many of them, and though he did not know it, one was a relative of Korban. He was a very gracious and dignified Persian King, to whom Tom gave the name of Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes, blue-haired and yellow-eyed, a creature of smoke and fire, of grey jade and topaz, sat upon a wall and received tribute daily, looking past his worshippers' heads with subtle shining eyes like those of an idol staring over priests in an Eastern temple. And she who was the priestess, the pretty pale creature of Tom's fading dreams, saw him offer worship at the Persian King's throne, and when he had gone by, sent down for Artaxerxes, who came reluctantly and yet was gracious to her. So she stroked the fur that Tom had stroked, and she buried her face where his strong hands had been, and the King endured the ritual uncomplainingly.

¶

WHEN another month had passed and Korban began to acquire some of the imperial dignity which his lineage assured to him, Tom Meredith was alone in the house, for his father and mother were in Italy. Yet he was not alone, for Korban was with him, sitting on his knee, while his master smoked and dreamed, with a book of adventure lying on the floor beside him. He wondered why it was that some had adventures and others had none, and why the world was so foolish as to order its dull life to avoid them. He forgot that the gift of Korban was an adventure and might have been a great one if he had sought out the giver. And perhaps the world is wise, for true adventures are rare, and he who seeks may never find them. But to others they are a gift.

The purring of Korban became strongly loud, and Tom Meredith fell asleep. For a cat is a sorcerer of sleep and may procure it for the wakeful. And how long he slept he knew not, but he woke suddenly with the sound of a telephone bell in his ears, and Korban was on the table where the instrument stood, looking at it with startled eyes. Tom reached out his hand, and yawned, and put the receiver to his ear.

Upon the magic instrument, which some use so grossly and without wonder, many voices are hard and untuneful, as if the little souls of the speakers had not strength to travel. But others are still sweet, full of character and music, and the voice that Tom heard was one of these though it was not strong. It was assuredly a feminine voice and suggested, he knew not how, fragile beauty and tenderness.

"Are you Mr. Tom Meredith?" asked the voice.

"Yes," said Tom, "who are you?"

"Be patient, young man," said the voice with a little tremor of laughter in it; "before I tell you that or anything else, tell me if you are very busy, or if you have time to talk with a—ghost?"

He knew this was an adventure, and he sat down on the table before he answered.

"No, I am not busy. Still——"

"Do not make excuses. Sit down. Are you comfortable? I want to speak to you, and if you are not comfortable how can I speak?"

"I am sitting down," said Tom. "Now tell me who you are and why you want to speak to me."

"I—I am a woman," said the voice.

"Your voice tells me that," said Tom.

"I hope it sounds a nice one," she said. "Yours is very kind and strong. And now I want to ask you a strange question. Are you a very, very honourable man, Tom Meredith?"

"I—I hope so," said Tom.

"Then if you are very honourable, noble sir, you will promise me something, will you not?"

"What am I to promise?" asked Tom.

"Honourable sir, you are cautious. But I shall not ask you to do anything. All I want is your sacred promise not to do something."

"I promise," said Tom.

"Then you swear by Bast that you will not try to find out who it is that speaks to you."

"Who is Bast?" asked Tom, wondering.

"She was Pthah, which is her great name, the wife of Bubastis and the goddess of cats," said the voice. "Do you swear by her?"

"I swear," said Tom. "And yet I wish so much to know."

"I am glad you wish it, honourable sir, but having sworn by our goddess you cannot break your word, for if you break it you will be torn to pieces by all the cats of Kensington, a very numerous and honourable company. Would that not be dreadful?"

"Very dreadful," said Tom, "but might

I not know how you found out I was likely to regard this goddess with awe ? "

" Are you not the Young Man who Strokes Cats ? " she asked, and then, of course, he knew that Korban was her gift to him.

" Then it was you who sent me Korban ? "

" Honourable sir, worshipper of Bubastis, you have a fine gift of naming cats. Is Korban beautiful ? "

" I think he is more beautiful now," said Tom. " He is listening to us. He is a wonderful cat and very wise."

" I am glad he pleases you," she said. " But now, kind and honourable sir, I must not waste your honourable time with cats. I want to say much and cannot."

" Say what you will," said Tom.

" May I speak to you at night when the mood takes me, good, kind sir ? "

" You may," said Tom.

" I shall not trouble you long," said the voice ; " perhaps it will only be a little while. Then I am going away."

Her voice seemed melancholy.

" Where are you going ? " he asked, and she said, " Ah, I do not know." And then she added suddenly :

" Do you wonder that I, a stranger to you, should want to speak to you, sir ? "

Tom blushed and was glad no one saw him.

" I—I don't know," he stammered. " Sometimes I have seen strangers I could have spoken to. Are you alone, kind voice ? "

" Quite alone," said the kind voice, sadly, " but for you, dear sir, I'm quite alone. Else I could not speak. You must tell no one that I speak with you. It must be our secret."

" I will tell no one," said Tom. " But tell me why you want to speak to me. Have we ever met ? "

There was a little gurgle of faint laughter in his ear.

" Who knows ? Perhaps at the shrines of Bubastis, great years ago. I shall not tell you if we have met. But do you not think it was a beautiful thought of mine to speak ? Many of us are lonely, and there is no shame when this beautiful instrument helps us. Have you ever heard of a lonely woman who wrote beautiful letters to a man she loved, a man who did not know her till she died ? "

" I never heard of her," said Tom. " Then you are lonely ? "

" Very lonely," she said. " All of us are lonely, but some are more lonely than others."

" Why did you have this thought for me ? " he asked.

" I shall not tell you yet, if you cannot guess, honourable and kind and dull sir."

" Am I so dull then ? " he demanded quickly.

" I meant modest, kind sir, so please forgive me."

" Just before you rang I was thinking how dull it was in London with the big world calling outside," said Tom.

" You wanted an adventure, sir. We all need adventures to keep our blood sweet. I will be your adventure. I will steal away your heart. You do not know who I am. I may be near you, the girl next door, or a countess in Park Lane ; I may be so beautiful that you would fall down and worship me, or so ugly that you would say, ' Poor girl.' I may be a waitress where you have your lunch when you go to the City, or even a typewriting girl, or a queen, or a little girl that is going away, or any strange woman with wild thoughts in her."

" I am sure you are strange and sweet," said Tom.

" Yes, I am very sweet, and exceedingly beautiful, and I would refuse kings if you asked me. And I shall speak to you every night, Tom."

It thrilled him to hear his name spoken and know what was in her heart.

" Tell me what you are. Have I ever seen you ? You might tell me that ? " he asked.

" You may have seen me, who can tell, since I have seen you at my palace window. I think you have seen one that I love not a little. But not so much as you, honourable sir."

" Then—then you love me ? " he asked.

" Dear simple, kind, honourable sir, do you think I could speak to you like this if I did not love you ? Incredulous, modest sir, of course I love you, and have loved you for many months, long before I sent you my Persian gift. Are you glad or sorry ? "

" I—I cannot answer you," said Tom. " It's rather strange, you know, isn't it ? "

" That's why I like it," she said, and it seemed to Tom that her head was on his shoulder and that they sat in the dark in some secret room while she told him her heart. " We women never get a chance of saying first without shame ' I love you,'

and yet often women's hearts are so full of love that they would die to speak. Am I not old and wise and sweetly shameless, kind sir?"

"If you speak like that I—I shall never see you," said Tom with a sudden fear in his heart.

"Oh, dear honourable sir, tell me why you say that."

"You will not let me if——"

"If I am so bold, dear sir? How wise you are! Now listen and you will hear me clap my hands."

He heard her clap them and heard her faint laughter.

"Why do you laugh?" he asked.

"Because you are wiser than you were. Tell me, dear sir, have you ever loved any girl devoutly?"

"Never," said Tom," not devoutly, you know. Of course, I've thought I loved someone every now and then."

"Then love me," she said, "and make my little mad adventure a real great one. Till I go away it will be very much for me, and I will hang roses on this blessed instrument that has given me such power as no girl ever had. I wonder if I am the first who has spoken like this. Tell me, dear sir, am I the first, and do you love me?"

"You must be a strange girl," said Tom, "I think you must have been the very first to have done this. But how can I say I love you?"

"Hard and cruel sir, why not say it? Can it harm you? You love no one and yet love must be in your heart, sleeping. But you do not hate me?"

"Oh no," said Tom, "of course not: what stuff to think so. I wish I could see you. What shall I call you?"

"You must make a name, inventive sir. Before I knew yours I made many for you."

"Tell me what they were," said Tom.

She laughed. "I can't tell you all of them. But once you were The Boy who Doesn't Want to go to Business, and then you were The Young Man who Stroked Cats. And also The Little Girl's Morning and Evening Tonic, and finally the—Beloved. Am I not shameful, dear critical, severe sir?"

"Oh no," said Tom, "I think you must be a very amusing girl."

"If I saw you I shouldn't be at all amusing. I should shrink into my shell of pearl, in which all nice little girls keep their souls, and you would not have patience to coax me out of it. But now I am free and can say what I like, and if I blush, dearly beloved, you cannot see me do it. Free souls are drab little things, such as they become when they close their wings. But have you sought out a jewel of a name for me, rich sir, explorer of the language of love?"

"I don't seem to be able to think of one," said Tom.

"What do you think of Ermyntrude?"

There was a little laughter in her voice.

"Oh no," said Tom.

"Or Gladys, or Yolande, or some name a yard long," she suggested.

Tom liked none of them.

"Then 'the Poor Girl' might do," she said. "Say the Poor Girl for the present. And now there is someone coming. Good night."

"I'll call you the Dear Unknown," said Tom. "But tell me one thing. Are you —ill?"

"They say so, but some day—I shall not be."

There was strange melancholy in her voice, and Tom knew it. He was learning things very fast.

"And now, sympathetic sleepy sir, I must say good night. Will you speak to me to-morrow?"

"Oh yes," said Tom, and as he spoke it seemed to him that he heard someone else

THE ARGOSY stands for only what is best in the realm of the short story. Its aim is to publish the greatest stories ever written—new work by living authors, stories by the masters of the past; in fact, the best stories produced by any writers, British or foreign, modern or otherwise, will fill these pages.

The Editor wishes to thank the many correspondents who wrote congratulating him on the success of the first number—a number that safely weathered the storm of industrial tribulation which was then sweeping the country. He now presents the second issue with the certain knowledge of his readers' confidence and support.

in her room, a dim ghost of a voice. And when he spoke again he received no answer. But the sound of her voice was in his ears like the murmur of waters, and he wondered about her and also about himself, until midnight heralded a new day.

He hoped to dream of her, but did not. Dreams were for the daytime, and through the long hours he thought of her, wondering how it was that she so affected him. He loved no one, but was ready to love, and the thought of the unknown, the "Poor Girl," of her laughing yet melancholy speech, moved him deeply. More and more he wondered where she lived, knowing that it must be near him, and on the way he took when he went daily to the station. She had called him the Young Man who Stroked Cats, and he had caressed many of them. Besides the Persian, he had made friends with a ferocious yellow Tom, with a tabby, and with one delightfully absurd white creature who possessed two large black spots on one side, three on the other, and an irregular blotch on his head. If the people who were owned by this cat were of the right sort, they undoubtedly called him Pierrot. And besides these friends of Tom's there were also others, to say nothing of his own, a magnificent striped tiger who so far scorned to notice the existence of Korban.

"I shall ask her what her cat is like," said Tom, cunningly. And that day he paid particular attention to every cat he saw. But Artaxerxes he did not see. That noble creature sat on a back wall and disdained the worshipping universe.

A modest youth—and youth is always modest under cover of its self-protecting blatancy—must always wonder when a woman loves him. To be chosen, one out of the world, is a strange glory, and it half blinds him. So it was with Tom Meredith. And his story was stranger than any he knew. The unknown's voice was the actual voice of romance; it swept him from the commonplace world into a very paradise. This was magic indeed, and he waited for the magical night like any lover, with impatience and with dreams.

When ten o'clock struck at last, he was in the library, almost in darkness, for the room was only dimly lighted by the shaded lamp on the desk. As he waited with the standard telephone upon a little table at his side, he was conscious of a fine tremor, an expectancy and apprehension of the nerves, which moved him strangely. His nature, awakening not at the sight of the beloved but at her far-off melancholy voice, brought so magically to his ear, felt the wonder that is in all things, and was eager and yet afraid. He could not yet say he loved her, but the pulses of his heart responded to her delicate music in the darkness of a great adventure.

And then at last the bell rang. He lost the world; he entered and sat in magical woods.

"Are you there, adventurous sir?"

"Magician, it is I."

"How sweet of you, sir Knight. All day I have wondered whether you would answer when I called for help under your castle walls."

"I've thought of you all day, sweet stranger."

Her romantic heart called to his and gave him words to speak with.

"Of the Poor Girl, who is perhaps so ugly that she cannot bear to be seen by him she adores?"

"I know you are beautiful, little girl. For even now your voice has music in it. It's—it's a harp in a dark wood."

He almost blushed to say so poetic a thing.

"I thank you, musical and dear sir. You must always think me beautiful, and never being undeceived you may carry me in your heart when——"

"When what, dear witch?"

"When I am—dust," she answered. Even the hard magic of the wire could not destroy the melancholy with which she spoke.

"Oh, shall I never see you, dear witch? That's hard."

"I think it will be never, sad-voiced sir. But to-day I saw you. How many wild cats did you stroke, absurd, kind sir?"

"Many," said Tom. "I cannot pass one without addressing it humbly and soliciting its favour after the manner of a poor tradesman who requests the favour of your esteemed orders. Your cat and mine, Korban, is with me now. He has another name as well. My little sister calls him Boffles, because, she explains, he is boffy and a muffy chunk as well as being a soggy buster."

"Kiss her for me, she must be a dear thing."

"And what is your cat like, unknown?"

"I will tell you, cunning, inquisitive sir. He has fur all over him and four legs and a tail, and sharp teeth, and when he is pleased he purrs loudly. He is, in fact, a typical cat."

"Wicked elusive one, you make him out no more than a furred mammal."

"Ah, I mean to be the secret lady and my cat must also be secret. So when I am—dust, and you are married, you will love me. In those days when you are dull and that hateful she, your wife, is also dull (as I'm sure she will be), you will think of me and my little bell will ring and we shall be off again into the magical forests. Then every speck of my dust will shine like stars, dear Tom."

"Your dust, your dust! Why do you speak so? Are you ill?"

"Yes, medical sir, so ill that Time is no longer the half-brother of Eternity as the healthy folk think him."

"Oh, child, do you mean that you——"

"Yes, sorrowful sir. They all say so now, not in words but in gentle looks and sorrowful ways."

"You mean you are dying, dear one?"

"That's true, pale sir. My hands say so if nothing else did."

"I must see you once, once!"

"If you could have done so when I was beautiful! But now you would be grieved, and I'd have you remember me as your mind will make me, a golden lass among roses and lilies. For only in your heart, which begins to love me, shall I be beautiful again."

"I *do* begin to love you. Is there no hope?"

"So little, gloomy sir, that I trust it not, nor think of it, and now I am glad. For when hope spread her wings and flew out of my window, I went to look after her and saw you again, and I knew the bright bird had left me a feather as she went. Being, as it were, already dust, I could speak to you, for no one has ever loved me with a man's heart, and I desired to be loved a little before my enemy came, dear sir."

"I—I love you," said Tom.

"Grieve not, my blessed lover. I've come by magic to make you unhappy. And yet you have been loved. That's something."

He knew it a sacrament, the greatest of all.

"It—it is much."

"Do you remember, dear, sweet, sorrowful sir, that when a poor girl was crushed in a railway accident, and lay dying on the stained grass, a stranger came pitifully to help her? She said, 'Do not move me, but kiss me so that I shall know before I die that someone has loved me.' Had some writer made that out of his heart I should have said the thought was genius and that a great man wrote it, but it was the death cry of a poor little girl that no one had kissed. Will not the kiss the stranger gave her warm his lips for ever?"

It was as if something broke inside Tom's heart. There were tears upon his cheeks.

"And I shall never kiss you, never, never."

"I kiss you, dear one, with my heart," she said, "kiss me with yours."

¶

SHE spoke no more that night. But Tom Meredith knew that he loved this voice of a dream, this mystic white rose of love in the valley of Shadow. He saw her given to him and yet reft away, a vestal devoted to the pale fires of the sterile deity Death. She went with him daily, and the sound of her voice was in his ears marvellously, and he waited for the night impatiently, and his friends wondered about him. One keener than the others said he was becoming religious, and maybe it was true. If religion be not love, love is ever religion, and the heart knows it.

And the white maiden was happier now, and those about her said she grew better. Hope sprang again in their hearts, though she had none. She thought this chosen love of hers the full accomplishment of her life, and she thanked destiny and her own courage and what gods there are for its flower, which was, it seemed, all that her life should grow. Someone beyond her own home would remember her, and she was glad that he was strong. For many know that immortality is remembrance.

The instrument by which she spoke to him stood near her bed or by the window when she sat there. For some it was an instrument of commerce, or of idle talk, but for her it became sacred, and she decorated it with flowers daily. When Artaxerxes came to see her she endeavoured to make him bow down to it, as if it were some ancient God of the Persian or a fetish from Bubastis which even kingly cats might worship. To no one but Artaxerxes did she speak of her lover.

"This morning he stroked your royal fur, my Persian King," said the white

maiden, " and he wondered if I belonged to you, great monarch. These yellow eyes of yours behold close those dear eyes of his. No one knows but you and me, my cat. It is our secret, a high adventure."

On the coasts of death and life are many adventures, and in many iron shores are havens. It may be that her beloved helped her when she seemed past help. " Man doth not yield himself to the Angels, nor unto Death utterly, save by the weakness of his will." His thought for her was strength. She reached out and leaned upon him.

So the night came and the hour when her soul shone like Hero's lamp across the water.

" Beloved ! "

He answered :

" Dear child ! "

" Patient sir, how went the day with you ? "

" I thought of you, you."

" That's sweet of my beloved ! "

" I cannot believe there is no hope for you, my child."

" They still hope, though I do not, and to-day there came another stranger to see me."

" Tell me. Did he say anything ? What did he say ? "

" Very little, dear sir. But he sat by me a long while and twisted his eyebrows over me, and I knew he was thinking. My old doctor left him with me. He was a strange man, neither big nor little, but strong, and he had a face which reminded me of someone. I can't think who it was. Then suddenly he told me something to make me laugh. Then he was silent again, and nodded to himself. Then he looked at me and smiled and said I was brave. He laid his hand on my forehead and went away."

" And yet said nothing ? "

" Nothing. Oh, now I remember that he was like, really just a little like, Napoleon."

" I shall hope for you. I seem to see you clearer every hour."

" Ah, dear sir, I saw you very clearly this morning. I have a glass that brought you near to me. I know the colour of your eyes now."

" What is the colour of yours, beloved ? "

" I can tell you that. They are brown with little specks of red in them, as if they were a red-brown opal, if such a thing could be. They used to be very merry. But yours are blue, sir."

" So they say, child. But what I want to know most is your name, dearest."

" I will not tell you that. Not even now. I am for you what I shall be, a spirit and a thought. If my voice ceases for you it will be a grief, but not the bitter wound it might be. If you knew my name, sir, you would not rest till you saw me, for you are strong and determined, and then you would say I was like a sad Cheshire Cat with nothing but a wan little smile left for you. Think of me as young and beautiful and strong and gay, as I once was, with a lovely voice. May I not tell you what I was, now I'm so old, oh, so old and wise ? "

" My dear one."

She heard his voice break a little, and then he spoke again.

" The telephone is by my bed now, beloved. After eleven o'clock you can speak to me there. If the night is weary, call for me."

" That will be strange—and sweet. Good night, dear sir."

For the nurse came to her and she would not share her secret with a soul. She smiled to herself and endured the hours. But he dreamed of her and seemed to see her plainly, though in the morning he could not remember her face.

In the morning a little parcel came for him. In it there was a miniature of a girl with brown eyes, in which he seemed to see specks of fire. And his imagination made it like the lady of his dream. But if it was hers, as indeed it should be, it must have been painted years before, since it was the face of a young girl, very sweet and bright and vivid.

" It is she," said Tom, and he knew that he loved her indeed. He showed it to no one, and kept it near his heart, waiting for the night-time to thank her. So the day went and the darkness came, and she rang to him at last.

" Dear, is that you ? " he asked.

" Yes, fair sir, it is I."

" I got what you sent me."

" My dreams ? "

" The little picture. It is beautiful."

" Some hateful girl who loves you has sent you her picture. Burn it."

" It is yours, I know."

" I admit nothing, sir, nothing whatever. Should I be so forward to do such a thing ? It is true I said I loved you, but I am only a voice, and a voice without a face is no more than a thought. Is she sweet to look at, this wretched girl you speak of ? "

" She is quite lovely."

" Ah, I hate her. Perhaps I was like her once. But, dear one, put her aside and listen."

" I am listening."

" I have news for you, good sir."

" What news, little girl with the brown eyes and red specks ? "

" Napoleon came to see me to-day, and he told me three absurd stories. I think it absurd for Napoleon to come here and stare at me and tell me funny things. One was about a little Jewish boy whose grandfather asked him to get well and promised him money if he would be quick about it, and the little boy, who was no more than seven years old, said, without opening his eyes, ' How much ? ' That is the only one I remember, for afterwards the little Emperor said he was going to stop thinking and do something."

" Oh, what, child ? Tell me, tell me."

" He says it is to be a punishment for being ill. He tells me it is very wicked to be ill and an immoral, scandalous perversity to show no signs of getting well. That's what the severe Emperor says, so I am to have awful things done to me. I hope not with boiling oil. But I feel sure there are knives and chloroform in it. And the little Emperor rubs his imperial chin and says I shall get well."

" My dear, my dear ! "

" Do not hope too much, sir, for I know better. At any rate, I know what a chance it is and know that he knows it. I was very impudent to him and called him Napoleon. I said, ' You know it is a chance, Emperor, a teeny weeny chance,' and he replied, ' Little girl, you mustn't know too much or I will have your head cut off. I am going to defeat the enemy. This shall be my Austerlitz.' And he laughed. But all the same it may be Waterloo."

" No, no, child, you shall not think that. When is it to be ? "

" The very next day after to-morrow, beloved. My cat is with me, Tom. You stroked him to-day."

" Very annoying and wicked beloved, tell me what that cat is like."

" Young man, he has four legs and a tail, and is a green tabby with blue and crimson spots. I think he ought to have a prize."

" His mistress ought to have one, I think. When we meet at last I shall certainly begin by beating you."

" How delightful to think we have got so friendly without your having seen me ! But no, kind sir, I know you better. You might have been a horrid suspicious person and been rude when I rang you up and said I loved you. But you were very nice about it, and if Napoleon is defeated you can say, ' I made the little girl happy at the last and she went away into the White Country blessing me ! ' "

" Don't, beloved ! "

" My dearest, my blessed, I have made you unhappy. But you have given me courage. Without you to think of I do not believe Napoleon would have persuaded me. It would have been easier to—sleep. But always I love you. You will speak to me to-morrow night and in the morning ? "

" Yes, yes," said her lover.

" My nurse comes, Tom. She wonders who it is I speak to when she is away, but I smile at her and will not tell. Good night, dear one."

When he said good night there were tears in his eyes and his voice was broken. So was his sleep, for he dreamed he saw her buried. And again she was by his side, veiled. At five o'clock in the morning he went down to the library and brought up to his bedroom a history of Napoleon's campaigns, in which he read the story of Austerlitz. When he came down to breakfast his father said he looked a bit pippy, and his mother declared he was losing his appetite ; but being English, he replied stolidly that he was only just a little " off it." But he wondered at the blindness of those who loved him, and their ignorance that a miracle had been wrought in their midst. A hundred times he looked at the smiling picture that she had half denied was hers. Would he ever see her face to face, or would she die in silence, going out into the night, into the strange land she called the White Country ?

The day ended in heavy wind and rain, and he went upstairs early. It was only a little after ten o'clock when she spoke to him.

" This is my last night before—it, dear Tom. All day long, beloved, I have been watching the clouds and listening to the wind. And the wild sunset was beautiful. How strange it is to think I may never again see one, never hear the wind in the trees ! But I am happy."

" My dear one," said her lover, " but are you not cruel ? "

" Cruel Tom ! Am I ? "

"I cannot see you and I cannot speak. Oh, it is hard to speak like this. Let me come to you. I will speak to your people. They cannot refuse me or you!"

"If I get well you shall see me. I promise that. And if not, think of me as the little girl whose picture you have, the little girl who loved you. You will remember me when others have forgotten and I'd have you remember me."

"I shall remember. But how shall I know, child? It may be days before you can speak to me."

"Long days," she sighed, "but I have written two letters already, Tom, and one is for you. If it is not Austerlitz after all for the little Emperor, you will get what I have written to you. I am quite happy and not afraid. For I know you love me."

"I shall love you always."

"It's sweet to hear you say it. Have you that strange, wild girl's picture?"

"It is in my hand."

"Kiss the little girl's picture, dear. I was like her once, and now I do not hate her for looking so well. Have you kissed it, dear sir, my lover?"

"Yes, I have kissed it."

"Then that's good night, I kiss you, beloved. And at nine to-morrow I will speak to you once more. You'll be there?"

"Yes, dear one."

And again she sighed, "good night," and then silence fell between them. That night he did not sleep till dawn, and then only for an hour. At six o'clock he rose and went out into the Gardens, walking there till eight o'clock struck. As he came back up the street he stopped and spoke respectfully to Artaxerxes, who sat at the receipt of his customary adulation and was very gloomy and grand about it. He also talked more familiarly with the spotted creature who was doubtless called Pierrot. He was neither grand nor gloomy but somewhat vulgar. He almost stood on his head with anxiety to be made much of, and he held up his chin to be scratched. For this is the cat's delight, and the human who does not know it is graceless, and Bubastis knows him not, nor his kindred, nor anything that is his.

And at nine o'clock the telephone bell rang and she spoke to him.

"Dearest one, Napoleon is in the house, so good-bye, my lover, till life comes back or till Eternity."

"I—I pray for you, my beloved," said her lover.

"My dear one."

And silence fell between them like a heavy curtain. But he whom she loved did his day's work and remembered nothing of it afterwards. For the outward world was less than a dream of a dream, and even as he thought of her he knew she might be dead.

As he went home he looked fearfully at every house, wondering if the blinds of one of them might be drawn down. But there was no sign of death about any, and fear lessened within him though the night was one of wild visions and sudden wakings, in which it seemed the bell of the telephone rang for him. Yet, when he started up there was always silence.

¶

ON the second day of his ordeal he spoke again to Artaxerxes, and very suddenly he knew the big Persian was hers. For as he bent down to the cat a little odour came up to him, an odour which was sharp and yet faint and sickly, the smell of ether or some powerful drug such as Artaxerxes might have brought from her sick room if he had but now left it.

"She lives here," he said. It was but five houses down the road from his own home. Though there was nothing to confirm his belief he was sure of it. And lifting Artaxerxes in his arms he set him on the wall and stroked him, and once more the faint, deadly odour was in his nostrils. So another day went on, and the silent night passed. At dawn Tom went out and all the houses still slept. But at her house the blinds of the upper story were drawn and the windows were open. On the sill of one window sat the Persian King.

"It is her room," he said.

That day he would not go to the City but walked in the Gardens. And when he went back at midday he saw a car come to her door just before he reached it. He seemed to know the face of the man who got out of the car. And yet he was a stranger. But as this stranger went up the path to the house door, Tom remembered the face that was in his mind. It was that of Napoleon. This was the little Emperor going to see her. So Tom waited, and after a long time, for the minutes were heavier than hours, Napoleon came out of the house and Tom went up to him and

said, "Will she live?" For he drew his bow at a venture.

"I hope so," said the Emperor, very gravely.

"I thank you," said Tom, but he could say no more, and went away. For he knew Napoleon was not yet sure of victory.

Whether the great man came again the next day or not, he could not tell, for by an evil chance he missed him. But at night he dreamed that he saw Napoleon as he is depicted in the last phase of his strange life, when his spirit was like a candle guttering in the wind. And the Emperor was gloomy, for it was, so Tom dreamed, the anniversary of Waterloo. And when he woke he knew that the spirit of his dream was aware that the day was the eighteenth of June, and his heart sank within him at the omen. But he fell asleep again, and her white spirit came to him saying she was dead and could now be his for ever. Yet once more she left him and he woke again, and found it no more than midnight, and he was certain, as disturbed souls are, that his fears had come true. She would speak to him no more. And with the thought of "no more" in his heart a heavy lethargy fell upon his spirit, for this certainty brings a dreadful peace to the spirit of man. There were tears upon his cheek, when this heaviness overpowered him, as though he were an unhappy child who had fallen asleep weeping.

But once more he woke suddenly. And there was cold sweat upon his brow and the hair of his head stood up. He tried to cry out, "my beloved, my beloved," and could not.

The telephone bell was ringing.

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in

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(*Author of "The Complete Book of Limericks."*)

THE AUGUST ISSUE WILL BE ON SALE JULY 10.

developed: selfishness, secrecy, and purpose. I wish I could get at what is the object of the latter. He seems to have some settled scheme of his own, but what it is I do not yet know. His redeeming quality is a love of animals, though, indeed, he has such curious turns in it that I sometimes imagine he is only abnormally cruel. His pets are of odd sorts. Just now his hobby is catching flies. He has at present such a quantity that I have had myself to expostulate. To my astonishment, he did not break out into a fury, as I expected, but took the matter in simple seriousness. He thought for a moment, and then said: "May I have three days? I shall clear them away." Of course, I said that would do. I must watch him.

JUNE 18.—He has turned his mind now to spiders, and has got several very big fellows in a box. He keeps feeding them with his flies, and the number of the latter is becoming sensibly diminished, although he has used half his food in attracting more flies from outside to his room.

July 1.—His spiders are now becoming as great a nuisance as his flies, and to-day I told him that he must get rid of them. He looked very sad at this, so I said that he must clear out some of them, at all events. He cheerfully acquiesced in this, and I gave him the same time as before for reduction. He disgusted me much while with him, for when a horrid blow-fly, bloated with some carrion food, buzzed into the room, he caught it, held it exultantly for a few moments between his finger and thumb, and, before I knew what he was going to do, put it in his mouth and ate it. I scolded him for it, but he argued quietly that it was very good and very wholesome; that it was life, strong life, and gave life to him. This gave me an idea, or the rudiment of one. I must watch how he gets rid of his spiders. He has evidently some deep problem in his mind, for he keeps a little notebook in which he is always jotting down something. Whole pages of it are filled with masses of figures.

July 8.—There is a method in his madness, and the rudimentary idea in my mind is growing. It will be a whole idea soon, and then, oh, unconscious cerebration! you will have to give the wall to your conscious brother. I kept away from my friend for a few days, so that I might notice if there were any change. Things remain as they were except that he has parted with some of his pets and got a new one. He has managed to get a sparrow, and has already partially tamed it. His means of taming is simple, for already the spiders have diminished. Those that do remain, however, are well fed, for he still brings in the flies by tempting them with his food.

July 19.—We are progressing. My friend has now a whole colony of sparrows, and his flies and spiders are almost obliterated. When I came in he ran to me and said he wanted to ask me a great favour—a very, very great favour; and as he spoke he fawned on me like a dog. I asked him what it was, and he said, with a sort of rapture in his voice and bearing:—

"A kitten, a nice little, sleek, playful kitten, that I can play with, and teach, and feed—and feed—and feed!" I was not unprepared for this request, for I had noticed how his pets went on increasing in size and vivacity, but I did not care that his pretty family of tame sparrows should be wiped out in the same manner as the flies and the spiders; so I said I would see about it, and asked him if he would not rather have a cat than a kitten. His eagerness betrayed him as he answered:—

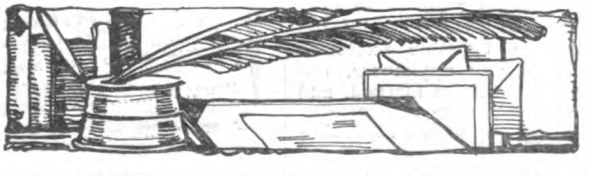
"Oh yes, I would like a cat! I only asked for a kitten lest you should refuse me a cat. No one would refuse me a kitten, would they?" I shook my head, and said that at present I feared it would not be possible, but that I would see about it. His face fell, and I could see a warning of danger in it, for there was a sudden fierce, sidelong look which meant killing.

10 *p.m.*—I have visited him again and found him sitting in a corner brooding. When I came in he threw himself on his knees before me and implored me to let him have a cat; that his salvation depended upon it. I was firm, however, and told him that he could not have it, whereupon he went without a word, and sat down, gnawing his finger, in the corner where I had found him. I shall see him in the morning early.

July 20.—Visited Renfield very early, before the attendant went his rounds. Found him up and humming a tune. He was spreading out his sugar, which he had saved, in the window, and was manifestly beginning his fly-catching again; and beginning it cheerfully and with a good grace. I looked around for his birds, and not seeing them, asked him where they were. He replied, without turning round, that they had all flown away. There were a few feathers about the room and on his pillow a drop of blood. I said nothing, but went and told the keeper to report to me if there were anything odd about him during the day.

11 *a.m.*—The attendant has just been to me to say that Renfield has been very sick and has disgorged a whole lot of feathers. "My belief is, doctor," he said, "that he has eaten his birds, and that he just took and ate them raw!"

(To be continued in next month's "Argosy.")



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The ARGOSY
The WORLD'S BEST STORIES

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The Young Man Who Stroked Cats

The romance of a strange present

By MORLEY ROBERTS

STORIES, like plants, do not begin: they grow, and what folks are apt to call their beginning is when they break the fertile earth and show themselves. So, in common parlance, Tom Meredith's story began what time a ragged youth came up the pathway to the front door and rang the bell, when Tom was at breakfast with his father and mother.

"A beggar, I fear," said Mr. Meredith.

"Rather cheeky to come to the front door," said Tom.

"I hope he isn't hungry," sighed his mother.

And the maid who opened the door was very lofty with the ragged youth.

"You should go to the back door," she said, with her nose in the air.

"I does what I'm paid for," retorted the ragged one. "Does Mr. Thomas Meredith live 'ere?"

He was carrying a basket, quite a dainty basket, and it was tied with pink ribbon. It caught the girl's eye just as she was prepared to say that her young master was not likely to see beggars at nine o'clock in the morning or, for that matter, at any time. It would have been untrue, but that would not have mattered.

"Is that for Mr. Meredith?" she asked.

"Yus. And it's a cat," said the young fellow, lifting the basket and peering in through the interstices.

"Who's it from?"

"I dunno. A young lidy give me a tanner to tike it to Mr. Thomas Meredith as lives 'ere. She p'inted out the 'ouse, and went away in a kerridge."

"If you'll wait a moment I'll speak to him," said the girl. She went to the breakfast-room.

"If you please, Mr. Thomas, there's someone says he has a cat for you," she announced.

"A cat for me? I've ordered no cat," said Tom. But no one would have been surprised if he had ordered one, for men are most properly divided into those who own dogs and those who are owned by cats, and it was notorious that Tom Meredith belonged to the smaller but more distinguished order.

"Oh no, sir," said the girl, "but the young man says that a lady in a carriage gave it to him and paid him to bring it here."

"How odd," said Tom's mother, eyeing him anxiously. So far she had had no reason to do so.

"Very odd," said his father. "Bring the cat in, Jones."

"And tell the man to wait," said Tom.

He Who Wanted More

A New "South Seas" Story

By H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

I BELIEVE Bones was the place on the San Francisco wharves mentioned in Frank Norris' " Shanghaied," the half bar, half sailors' boarding-house, where the Brown Sweater met Wilbur Ross. At all events it might have been from its position on the water front and its handiness for the export delivery of doped or drunken sailor men.

But even before Pussyfoot came along Bones and the Red Dog—long vanished—and the old pot-house where Larry Marr used to serve the drunken old sailor men from a " big five gallon jar " were beginning to clean up. It wasn't much but it was better then nothing, and a man in those later days could take a drink at Bones with the reasonable expectation of not waking next morning outside the Gate and bound for Cork by way of the Horn, or Canton and ports beyond.

Captain Samuel Bowlby was remarking on this matter one afternoon to a select company in the bar first mentioned, incidentally touching on the evils of adulteration of liquor, on Balloon juices he had known, Samchu, Island drinks, and so passing to the consideration of old-time Island ways and customs.

" I believe if you told the straightest chap in the world he mustn't cut his gran'-mother's head off, and told it to him long enough, he'd up and do it.

" Ever heard of Lacy? He died fifteen years ago, so he'd be behind your time, but he was well known on the front and him and me were partners in the old days. He put up the money for a ship, and I put up the money to buy trade and we started in business, him and me, at Vatuna, which isn't bigger than a soup plate—it's over in the Gilberts—but big enough for a two-man job for chaps that weren't aiming at being Rockefellers. There was copra enough for that—and Lacy was to do the getting whilst yours truly did the fetching and carrying.

" We bought the ship, she was a tops'l schooner, for an old pair of boots from McCormack's yard where she was in to be broke up; McCormack said it was either that or sell her for a sieve, and we puttied her holes and said our prayers over the garboard strake, and filled her trade room with stick tobacco that was half m'lasses, and clay pipes that was half of them plugged, and Barlow knives that wouldn't cut a cheese without bluntin'. I reckon the only live things was the mouth organs, and they hadn't more'n two notes to them—but, you see, that was in the times I was speaking of when the Kanakas was straight and clean and pretty much gentle-folk, trustin' your honour and not smellin' at the goods. To-day you go down to the Islands with a stock of trade and you'll see what they'll want. Gramophones, b'gad, and no duds neither; Paris hats for the women, patent leather boots for the bucks, and if they crack you'll hear about it next voyage. Plug tobacco? nuthin'—cig'rettes, that's all the smoke, and mind you, they're from Turkey with pictures on the boxes of hairiams and camels and such—and they know what's what, and what's faked and what isn't, for, as I was telling you, they're a nosy lot of choc'late hounds, ranging from low-down half French to half Chink and quarter-bred Dago—no more like the old stock than a cockroach's like a racehorse.

" But in the old times it was different, as I was tellin' you.

" Lacy was the son of a Baptis' minister, and ' straight Lacy ' was the name he went by amongst them as was scoffers; turn that fellow on to pray in storms or disasters by sea and it was like startin' a dynamo, better than Bishop Selwyn he was when you got him going, and when the steam was shut off there he was a pract'cle man, as you may say, for bizness and not above takin' his whack below deck, all the same that he was terrible down on drink 'mongst the hands and Kanakas.

" He liked preachin', well edjucated as

you might say, and it was a pleasure to listen to him when he'd got the main steam on and the hose-pipe turned on the sinners he was cleanin', same as they do the tram-cars in the central depot—but all the same, as I said, a good bizness man.

II

"WELL, we got along for Vatuna, him and me, and one morning soon after sun-up we raised the island and before noon we were inside the reef and the hook dropped in fifteen fathom water. There wasn't no village to be seen, but the beach was thick as Market Street with people, bucks and old men and Marys and children, and the clothes on the hull crowd wouldn't have made the hemming of a bally-girl's skirt, but lookin' at them you never bothered about that. I reckon the Almighty had dressed them to fit the sun, there was no one else to dress them, and if they were good enough for Him they was sure good enough for us.

"No sooner had the hook got the coral than the canoes began to put out. I tell you, boys, that place was better than a picture with the pa'm trees and the white sand. I can't never call it to mind but the tune of them Salvation howlers comes up in me mind about the 'every prospect pleasin'.' I said to Lacy, 'This is enough for yours truly when we've hit the night up, it's here for me and no more 'Frisco, and if the pa'm toddy is as good as the looks of them girls in that canoe to port, I reckon it's here for life.'

"'Don't you be worryin' about no girls,' says Lacy. 'It'll take us all our time to level up with the expenses, and I reckon when you've made half a pile out of the place you'll never want to see it no more. How'd you spend money here if you had it?' he says. 'No, sir, you can't eat prospects, nor bet on them, nor drink 'em, you can take that from me straight.'

"That was the sort of chap he was, full of common sense got in a long life of experience, and always pullin' out somehow top dog. He married himself to them two girls in the canoe before he'd been in the place a month, but that's neither here nor there.

"Le Bintu is more to the point. He was the king of that fit-out; he was an old chap raisin' sixty or so and he weighed all two hundred, a powerful big man with a chest bigger'n Dempsey's, but gone soft a bit with good livin' and takin' things easy.

"He come off in an outrigger and clum aboard same as if he was used to the bizness, which he wasn't. You'd scarce believe me, but in those days you'd sometimes strike an island that had scarcely ever seen a ship, or sometimes if you put into a lagoon you'd see the whole population shinnin' into the woods and up the trees, scared of blackbirders and Bully Hayes. Hayes was scarce dead long enough to be putrid those times—it's different now. The copra traders have made the islanders a wise lot, the B.P. boats and the dam soap companies' ships have their moorin's off every island bigger than a spittoon, and Bully Hayes is forgot.

"Le Bintu had seen ships before, but mostly it was when they were piled on the reef; the white men he'd met in with had been mostly drowned corpses, all except Lacy, who'd put in last year in a schooner from Manoa and spotted the place as a trade proposition.

"Le Bintu remembered him as soon as he came aboard and they chummed up thick. Lacy could talk the Gilbert island talk, his tongue could get round pretty near anything, and when he told Le Bintu that he'd come to stay, the old chap was pleased, said he'd build us houses and what not, seemed to think the lot of us had come to roost there for our health or because Lacy had taken a fancy to him.

"Lacy made him sit on the chicken-coop whilst he explained matters, tellin' how we'd come with all sorts of good things to exchange them for coco-nuts. Lacy didn't explain that the nuts would have to be opened and the insides dried to make copra, he didn't do more in that first lesson than put Le Bintu wise to the general principles of trade, leaving the rest to follow on, and the old fellow sat on the chicken-coop with a Seidlitz-powder fizzin' in his hand, absorbin' the news.

"You see, it wasn't difficult to understand; a knife would be given for so many nuts and so on. He took it all in, and drinking success to the business, he hands back the glass and starts ashore to get the chaps together to build the trade station.

"We wanted a house for Lacy, a go-down for the copra and another for the trade goods, and those Kanakas set to work on the business 's if they'd been born to building, like the beavers.

"Mind you, we were paying them nothing

for the building, it was the prospect of trade that made them work, the chance of gettin' sticks of tobacco—they'd got to the end of their last case of tobacco, which a wreck had sent 'em ashore—and hatchets and fish-hooks, and such just for nuthin' but the fun of climbin' trees and gatherin' nuts.

" They built quick and strong enough for all was wanted, and stuck on a thatch of palm leaves. Lacy's house had two rooms to it and a cookin' place outside ; the trade go-down was beside it to the east, same as that glass is beside that t'bacco pouch on the table, and the copra house was behind the go-down, same as this match's behind the glass. You see how the thing stood, too close together to please an insurance company, but there wasn't no insurance companies on Vatuna, so nobody bothered.

" It was a good pitch, with the lagoon like a picture at the front door, and the trees behind to shelter the place from storms comin' that way, and in six days it was complete down to the crockery ware, which we made from coco-nuts.

" Then we got the trade ashore and bunk bedding and furniture and such for Lacy. It was arranged that I was to take the San Lorenzo to Nova Vana, where a cargo was to be picked up for 'Frisco, do another voyage if I could get a cargo to run any port this side of the Americas, and then come back to Vatuna to pick up the copra.

" Lacy had the first makings of a big trader : he knew where to look for cargoes, that's the whole business of ship-ownin'—leavin' aside barratry and the swindlin' of sailor-men out of their dues—knowin' where and when to look for cargoes, and Lacy had an instinct for the business, same as a terrier has for rats.

" Havin' got everything ashore and ship-shape there was nuthin' left for me to do but pull up the hook and put out for Nova Vana—nuthin' that's to say, except takin' on fruit and water. I'd been pretty busy aboard, and when the lay-off time came I went ashore to stretch my legs, leavin' the mate, Jarvis was his name, to see after the waterin'. I cruised round with Lacy, takin' stock of things and explorin' that place right from the beach up to the top of the high ground where the trees fell away and where right round the clear space sandal-wood trees grew amazin' fine, but poor in number.

" ' Sandalwood's gone,' said Lacy. ' I expect it's not so much that the trees have been over-cut as just the fac' that it's give out. Look at them trees,' he says, ' they're all right, aren't they, well what's the matter there aren't more of them ? I believe,' says he, ' that the coco-nuts have fought them and done 'em in.'

" ' But sure to goodness, Lacy,' says I, ' you don't mean to be talkin' that bunk. How's trees to fight trees, if that's what you're meanin' ? '

" ' Well,' says Lacy, ' when you've been round the world long enough,' says he, ' you'll find folks and things can fight with more than their fists. Trees fight trees, of course they can, ask Le Bintu and he'll tell you same as I do, only you can't ask him, not knowin' the lingo.'

" ' That savage,' says I.

" ' Savage—nuthin',' he replies. ' That chap has more sense in him than half the whites you'd pick up where you've come from. I've been talkin' to him a lot and gettin' at his way of thinkin' of things, and he's what I say, and you can take it from me.'

" ' I don't hold with that sort of talk,' I replies to him ; ' crackin' a Kanaka up above a white man.'

" ' I'm talkin' sense,' he says, ' and to the book.'

" ' Book your eye,' says I, ' there's no book about it ; a white's a white and a black's a black and a brown's a brown, and the white's top dog.'

" ' Maybe he is,' replies he, ' but as I was sayin' and as I'm repeatin', Le Bintu has more sense in his noddle than half the whites you'd meet in a day's march, and I'll prove it to you.'

" ' Bet you a dollar you don't,' I says.

" ' Bet you ten I do,' he replies.

" ' Done,' says I.

" ' Done,' says he, ' and Jarvis will hold the stakes.'

" ' Right,' I says, ' and now let's trundle down and fix things up, for I want that ten dollars.'

" ' So do I,' says he, ' and I'm goin' to have them.'

" We come down and rowed off and found Jarvis. We handed over the stakes and told him what it was all about, and he bein' a hundred per cent. red blood American, bucked against Lacy's idea and wanted to join in the bet, so the stakes was raised to twenty dollars, Jarvis and me going partners against Lacy, and then came the question when the thing was to be decided.

" The bother was we hadn't an umpire, but Lacy said the thing would be so plain to be seen we didn't want an umpire. He said you don't want an umpire to tell black from white. ' You'll be satisfied enough,' he says, ' when I've shown you. I'm goin' to ask Le Bintu to supper to-night at my house and you two'll come, and I'll just leave it to yourselves to decide which's right, me or you.'

" We left it at that, and gettin' along for four o'clock we turned ashore and went up to Lacy's house, where he was going to give a spread, sort of house warmin' he said it would be, and he'd had a pig killed and cooked; there was canned stuff beside and a pa'm salad and truck like that with drinkin' nuts for drink, and Le Bintu came along in his best gee string, and down we sat on the mats and the fun began.

" I've sat down to a worse dinner and with whites a lot worse gentlemen than Le Bintu. Still, that was nuthin', this wasn't no gentility rodeo, it was a question of sense, not of how the chap picked a chicken bone, and I didn't see that we got no forrader, and said so to Lacy, and ' Wait a bit,' said he.

" Then when we'd done he began talkin' to Le Bintu in the native. He said that Le Bintu had told him a story the day before and that he would tell it again, only, as we hadn't the tongue, he'd have to translate, which he did, and the story was this :

" A year or so before a big gale struck the island, coming up from the north-west, and when it had near blown out along comes a ship, a schooner, to judge by his description, half dismasted and runnin' before the wind under jury rig ; from the north-west she was comin' and right before her the livin' reef, and there was no use tryin' to steer her off it. The chap at the wheel had the choice of landin' on the reef broadside on or stem. He chose to come at it like a gentleman, not like a rollin' hog, and he kept her as she went with wind and tide, twelve knots if she was goin' one, till a great green sea took her and lifted her up on the reef.

" Le Bintu said she half divided the wave, but there was enough of it under her to land her on the reef hard and good. It was just on turn of the tide and the sea hadn't time to knock her about much before it fell.

" The chaps on board were drunk, to judge by Le Bintu's account of their carryin's-on on deck, where they were able to keep a foothold, for she lay pretty even with not more than a two-foot list to port. They'd been drunk most like when the gale took them ; anyway, they was drunk now, and cuttin' up rough. They stuck to their ship where the drink was, and they'd evidently no ambition to go cruisin' ashore ; anyhow, there they stuck, and next day saw them patchin' up a boat, evidently intendin' to cross the lagoon to the island.

" However that might be, after a day or two, when they'd got the boat tinkered, it's pretty sure they sighted a sail that Le Bintu and his crowd ashore didn't see, for they launched the boat on the lagoon, but instead of rowin' to the island they made for the break in the reef and went through it, takin' the open sea and raisin' their sail. They never come back any more; whether they fetched a ship or whether Davy Jones fetched them is not on the bills, and Le Bintu and the chaps here didn't care enough to ask. They'd seen enough of the cuttin's and carryin's-on of that schooner crowd to make them want to see no more. So they waited a few days to make sure there was no one else aboard of her, and then they crossed over to the reef in their canoes and walked round her as she lay there high and dry with the seaweed on her copper all crinkling in the sun.

" Then they climbed aboard of her, and one fellow cut his foot with a bit of glass; it was a broken gin bottle.

" They cleared up the glass on deck and went below, walkin' careful. There wasn't much plunder on that ship ; she was in ballast and so was the lazarette. The chaps had taken all the truck worth takin', and her spars and sails and the brass-work, where it could be torn off ; there wasn't much to pay a chap to face the smells of her. Kanakas have fine noses, and Le Bintu said as much as that when he was talkin' of this old schooner. But there was one thing he brought off with him and which he still kept intac', as you might say; and when Lacy had come to this part of the story, ' Now,' says he, ' I'm goin' to prove to you what I said, that there are Kanakas that can lay over many a white man in sense, whether it's common sense, or horse sense, or the sense of smell, or the lot of them joined together, and to prove it to you we'll have to go to Le Bintu's house for me to show you what I mean.'

" We were willin' ; up we all got, and with Le Bintu leadin' us, off we went to his shack, and there, when we'd crowded in,

Lacy shows us a bottle of gin hangin' by a string from the ceilin'.

" A full bottle it was that'd never been broached.

" It came out that Le Bintu had found it in the cabin of the schooner and brought it ashore as an ornament. It was a clear white glass bottle and the gin in it was bright as diamonds when the sun was on it, gin-bright, as the sayin' is, and hangin' up it held the light, and old Le Bintu would sit and look at it same as if it was a picture, instead of scoffing it. And, ' There you are,' said Lacy, ' ain't that more sensible than what nine out of ten whites would have done ? And I'll be glad of them twenty dollars as soon as you please to hand them over.'

" But he didn't collect them as easy as that. Jarvis out and at once denied we'd lost, sayin' that to misuse gin like that was the act of a damn fool, whereas I took the inner tack, pointin' out that Le Bintu, not knowin' what was in the bottle, showed no sense in keepin' off it; so we had Lacy between us like a bow head between a thresher and a swordfish.

" He couldn't manage nohow to collect that twenty dollars and never did. Le Bintu asked him what we were all talkin' about and what his bottle had to do with the subject, and Lacy told him we were talkin' about the stuff in it and, fearin' that he might have put his foot in it, he warned Le Bintu that the bottle must never be opened, nor the stuff in it drunk.

" You see, he didn't want to have to deal with a chief of the island who'd got a taste for drink. That place was a hundred per cent dry, they'd never been used to make even pa'm toddy—and Lacy had done enough tradin' in the islands to know that drink cuts no ice for the trader.

III

" NEXT day, having taken on water, I sailed, me and Jarvis, leavin' Lacy to work his works and reckonin' to get back for a full cargo of copra. We got hung up here in 'Frisco a month over some worry with the customs that was cleared up and didn't matter, still it hung us up a month, and the customs didn't take any consideration of that; it was the same as finin' us a bag full of dollars for committin' no offence, but the customs didn't bother about that, seemed to think we ought to fancy ourselves lucky not bein' clapped in dutch for no reason whatever, and there's no use in arguin' with the customs.

" Then we were held up a week down in Peru where we took a cargo to Valdivia. A chap smellin' of garlic came aboard and clapped a notice on the mainmast, and it cost us forty dollars to have it taken off. That's the Dago way. But, thank God, they didn't fumigate us as well.

" We put out of there and did another voyage, and then we ran down to the island to pick up the copra that was waitin' for us.

" We hadn't done well between one thing and another; we'd got cargoes, but there was delays and port dues and a crew eatin' its head off. We'd want that copra to even things up, and luck seemed with us, for copra prices were soarin'.

" The big English soap companies were just then puttin' out their claws to the Pacific and places; they wanted all the coco-nut oil they could lay their hands on, and when you want a thing in the business world, up goes the price.

" Jarvis and I reckoned that if we could only get the stuff to the mainland within the next six weeks or so we'd maybe hit top prices—he was working on shares—and we'd sit below of nights, leavin' the Kanaka bo'sun in charge—him bein' as good a sailor as ourselves pretty near—and we'd talk of what we'd do with the coin when it fell into our pockets.

" I've took notice that it's always bad spendin' money before you have it; the dollars may be comin' to feed like ducks out of your hand, but that sort of a thing puts a shifter on them, same as when the ducks smell the sage'n onions waitin' for them.

" However, we didn't bother about that; we used to talk at nights of what we'd be doin' with the profits, till one night Jarvis says, ' I reckon we ought to raise Vatura at sun-up or thereabouts.'

" Sure enough we did.

" It wasn't more than half an hour after sun-up when the Kanaka in the cross-trees spots the land.

" We come along bowling. Ever notice if you're goin' along to what you don't want to find the wind's pretty nearly always with you ?

" We raised the island and before noon we were comin' in behind the reef. The place looked just the same as before only that Lacy's house was gone—and the godowns.

"'Lord, the copra's gone!' cries Jarvis.

"'Looks like it,' says I, 'but here's Lacy.'

"We saw him in the crowd on the beach, and here he was comin' off in the first canoe, being paddled by a girl.

"He comes on board.

"'Well, what is it?' says I.

"He just threw up his two hands—like that.

"'Come below,' says he.

"We went below, and then he sat down and told us all.

"One of his wives was in the canoe alongside, it was she who had paddled him off to us. He told us about her, but we cut short his tales of domestic bliss and got his nose to the grindstone.

"'Cut it out,' says I. 'Where's the copra gone to, and where's your house?'

"'Gone,' says he, 'gone to blazes—gone up in smoke. I'll tell you,' he says, and he does.

"Remember he'd told Le Bintu he mustn't open that bottle hanging in his house or taste the contents? Well, natural enough, the Kanaka got that workin' in his mind like a rat in a cheese. He wanted to open that bottle pretty bad; it got at last so that he couldn't stand it any longer, and took counsel with his niece, Tikei, who was one of Lacy's wives.

"She knew how to open bottles for Lacy, he'd two dozen of beer, and she'd opened nearly the lot of them for him, so she fetches the corkscrew and does the same for her uncle.

"He smells at the stuff and shuts one eye. Then he tastes it with his finger and shuts the other eye. Tikei runs back to Lacy's house with the corkscrew, frightened lest he'd find out she had took it, and Le Bintu sits down with the bottle in his hand to consider things.

"About an hour after that they heard him singing; about an hour after that he was out with an axe, the whole population heeling it before him and shinning up trees, Lacy included.

"Le Bintu does a dance on the beach, and then he goes for Lacy's house and fires it. By next morning the drink had left him and he was lyin' on the sands, the axe by his side and the empty gin bottle in his fist. He'd burnt the house, the two go-downs, all the copra waitin' to be shipped and all the remains of the trade. He'd killed two pigs and all the fowl belongin' to himself and his relatives, and he said it wasn't him, but something that had come out of the bottle. Not a bit ashamed of himself, no more than if everything had been done by someone else. 'And,' says Lacy, as he finished his story, 'I believe he's right, for strong drink is a devil, and the chap that falls to it is under the influence of someone else than himself, and,' he says, 'it seems to me that, seein' he's come to a conclusion like that as the result of his first drunk and without any teachin', it seems to me,' says he, 'that I was right in my remarks that a Kanaka may have as much sense in him as a white,' he says, '—and that twenty dollars is mine.'

"We didn't want to argue with him, we were too sick at the loss of the copra and our chances, and there wasn't no need to, for Le Bintu had come on board to do it for himself.

"We heard his step on the companion-way, and down he came, smilin' and not ashamed of himself, from his looks.

"He sat there and talked. He had picked up a lot of English from Lacy, and pretty soon it came out why he'd come on board.

"Lacy went on deck for somethin'; and as soon as Le Bintu found himself with us, what does he do but pick out a couple of pearls he had got from the lagoon, and what do you think he wanted for them? You'd a' thought he'd had enough of gin and its charms; well, he hadn't, he wanted more.

"Jarvis said he was a regular Oliver Twist—whatever that was—and boys, I'll tell you, that thing gave me such a turn against liquor I didn't raise me elbow again, not for a fortnight after.

"But it was twenty dollars in our pockets from Lacy. When he heard what we had to tell him he forked the money out of his pocket without a word. Said he reckoned he'd been buckin' against a certainty—which he had."

WHAT THEY SAY—

In "The Farmer's Wife"

BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS

[*As played at the Court Theatre, London.*]

'LOVE did ought to be got over in early life. To see an old man in love be worse than seeing him with the whooping-cough."

" Married people hide the truth for very shame. Marriage don't alter women—nothing alters 'em. They change their clothes—not their claws."

" Beer-drinking don't do half the harm of love-making. For why? Drink's a matter between a man and himself. Love's a matter between a man and a woman; and that means the next generation. If I was the Government I'd give drunkards a rest and look after the lovers."

" The rising generation only plays for its own hand, and its own hand don't pat daddy's whiskers no more—'tis busy in daddy's pocket."

" I don't say love first and the rest nowhere; but I do say love first and money in its proper place—just handy to round the corners and ease the strain and lift the burden."

" We wasn't put into the world to imitate our fathers. Life ban't writing in a copy-book. Go your own way and make history, I told Smerdon not a week agone. Let them follow as can't lead, I said; and if you can't break free from your dead father's ideas and your live mother's apron-strings at your age—then there's no hope you'll ever set the sieve afire."

" Half-a-crown a week on a poor man's wages have meant marriage to thousands. Why, half the coming generation be the result of two-and-six rise, for the fathers!"

" The treason of to-day be the reason of to-morrow."

" What we generally get be a wife neither bad nor good—just a human woman with her faults and virtues so mixed, that we never know which it is to be—from the time she gets out of her bed to the time she goes back to it."

" The money that gives us most pleasure to spend is that which we devote to others."

" I don't know nothing about reason. A man like me is far above reason. I'm never beat. I go on my own way like the wind and the wave—never tired."

" Every lover's done the biggest thing in the whole world in the eyes of the girl who loves him."

" They be such clever people. But the cleverest people ain't always clever enough to be happy."

" A man's a garden, and some women have the cleverness to get good crops and brave flowers out of him; and others fetch up nothing but weeds, because they sow nothing but weeds."

" Us know each other's tempers very well—our strength and our weakness—and give and take is the whole art of marriage, so far as I can see from the outside."

Chrystal's Century

A cricketer's hour of uncertain glory

By E. W. HORNUNG

IT really began in the pavilion up at Lord's, since it was off Tuthill that most of the runs were made, and during an Eton and Harrow match that the little parson begged him to play. They had been in the same Harrow eleven some eighteen years before. The Reverend Gerald Osborne had afterwards touched the hem of first-class cricket, while Tuthill, who captained a minor county, was still the very finest second-class bowler in England.

"Who's it against?" asked Tuthill, with a suspicious glint in his clear eye; for if he was not good enough for first-class cricket, third-class was not good enough for him.

"A man who's made his pile and bought himself a place near Elstree; they let him have a week in August on the school ground, and I ran the side against him for the last match."

"Decent wicket, then," said Tuthill, with a critical eye upon the Eton bowling.

"I shouldn't wonder if you found it a bit fiery," said the crafty priest, with a timely memory of Tuthill's happiest hunting-ground. "And they'll put you up and do you like a Coronation guest."

"I don't care twopence about that," said Tuthill. "Will they keep my analysis?"

"I'll guarantee it, Tuttles," said the little parson.

And Tuttles consulted the diary of a conscientious cricketer.

"I can," said he, "and I don't see why I shouldn't. I was coming up for the Oval Test in any case. It will only mean taking another day or two while I am about it. You can put me down."

"And rely on you?" added the other, as one whose fortune was too good to be true.

"My dear Jerry," cried Tuttles, with characteristic emphasis, "I never chucked a match in all my life! It's a promise, and I'll be there if no one else is. But who is this sporting pal of yours? I suppose he has a name?"

Osborne went out of his way to applaud a somewhat inferior stroke by the Harrow boy who was making all the runs.

"As a matter of fact," he finally confessed, "he was at school with us, though you probably don't remember him. His name's Chrystal."

"Not old Ginger Chrystal, surely?"

"I believe they did call him Ginger. I don't remember him at school."

"But I do! He was in our house, and super'd, poor beast! Ginger Chrystal! Why on earth didn't you tell me who it was before?"

"You've named one of my reasons, Tuttles. He's a bit shy about his Harrow days. Then he says himself that he was no more use at cricket than he was at work, and I thought it might put you off."

"No more he was," said Tuttles reflectively. "Do you mean to say he's any good now?"

"No earthly," replied the little parson, with his cherub's smile; "only just about the keenest rabbit in the whole cricket warren!"

The finest second-class bowler in England displayed a readiness of appreciation doubly refreshing in an obviously critical temperament.

"And yet you say he has done himself well!" he added incredulously, as his mirth subsided.

"Only made a hundred thousand in South America, Tuttles."

"Nonsense!"

"It might be double by the way he does things."

"That utter rabbit at every mortal thing?"

"He's not one now, Tuttles, at anything but cricket. That's his only weak point. At everything else Chrystal's one of the smartest chaps you ever met, though he does weigh you and me put together, and quite one of the best. But he's so mad-keen on cricket that he keeps a pro. for

himself and his son of seven, and by practising more than any man in England he scores his ten runs in all matches every season. However, when this boy runs into three figures, or gets out, you must come and meet the modern Chrystal in the flesh: there's plenty of it, though not too much for the heart inside, and at the present moment he's spreading every ounce of himself in a coach he's got here in my name."

It was a fair enough picture that the parson drew, for Chrystal was really corpulent, though tall and finely built. He wore a stubby moustache of the hue which had earned him his school nickname, but underneath were the mouth of a strong man and the smile of a sweet woman. It was a beaming, honest, unassuming face; but the womanly quality reappeared in a pair of very shapely, well-kept hands, one of which could come down with virile force on Tuthill's shoulder, while the other injured the most cunning bunch of fingers in second-class cricket. Then a shyness overcame the great fellow, and the others all saw that he was thinking of the one inglorious stage of his career. And his wife, a beautiful woman, took charge of little Osborne; and Tuthill, who had sense and tact, congratulated Chrystal point-blank and at once upon his great success in life.

But for an instant Chrystal looked quite depressed, as though success at school was the only sort worth achieving; then his smile came out like the sun, and his big body began to shake.

"Yet," he whispered, "they promised me a dog's life and a felon's death because I couldn't make Latin verses! Do you remember my second half of a pentameter?"

"Laomedontiaden!" cried Tuthill, convulsed with laughter at the sudden reminiscence.

"I never could see where the laugh came in," confessed Chrystal, like the man he was. "But I've no doubt that was what cooked my goose."

Tuthill was much impressed.

"And he never said it didn't matter," as he afterwards put it to the parson, "or changed the subject to the things he has done, or took out a big gold watch, or drowned us in champagne, or did or said a single thing that wouldn't have done honour to the bluest blood on the ground. All he did say, at the end of the innings, was that he'd give half he'd got to have been in the eleven himself! Oh, yes, I've promised to play in his all right; who could refuse a chap like that? I'm going for the whole week; let's only hope he won't drop all his catches off my stuff."

"You must forgive him his trespasses, Tuttles," the clergyman said, with some gravity and no irreverence at all.

"I can't forgive that one," replied the candid demon of second-class cricket. "I never could, and never shall."

But it was not for Tuthill to forgive when the great week came, or, at all events, before the week was at an end. It is true that the catches followed the non-cricketer to every position in the field, as catches will, and equally true that a large majority of them were duly "put on the floor." But, as good luck and his own accuracy would have it, the great bowler was not usually the sufferer. Once, indeed, when it was otherwise, he did tell his host, with unpremeditated emphasis, that the ball wouldn't bite him; but that was the only contretemps of the kind, and an ample apology followed when the wicket fell. But a more ample revenge was in store for the moving spirit of the week.

It had gone like wedding-bells from the first over of the first match; even the most hardened country-house cricketer of the party could not look back upon a better time. Mrs. Chrystal proved a charming hostess, and Chrystal a "heavenly host," according to one of the many mushroom humorists who shot up in the genial atmosphere of his house. The house itself was old and red and mellow, but none the worse for the electric light and the porcelain baths which Chrystal had put in. The place, like so many in that neighbourhood, was a mass of roses, and a stroll in the garden after dinner was like swimming in scent. There was a wagonette to take the players to the ground, a daily sweepstake on the highest scorer, a billiards handicap for the evenings. Creature comforts were provided on a scale which fell deliberately short of plutocratic display, but of no other standard applicable to the case. Finally, the weather was such as an English summer can still produce in penitent mood; and the only cloud of any sort that brooded over the week was the secret cloud in Robert Chrystal's heart; for it was half-broken by a sequence of failures most abject even for him.

"Four runs all the week, and they were an overthrow," said he, with a rueful humour which but partially disguised the tremendous tragedy of the thing. "Three times first

ball! I'll tell you what I'll do before next August: I'll lay out a ground of my own, and it shall have a subterranean passage from the wicket to the pavilion. Either that, or let me be translated like Enoch when it happens to me again!"

There was one who whispered that it would be the first translation he had ever achieved; but even that wag would have made Chrystal a present of his highest score, and they all felt the same. None more sympathetic than Tuttles when it was merely a batting misfortune; up to the Friday night he had twenty-nine for two hundred and thirty-one, and but for Chrystal it would have been twenty-eight for two hundred and thirty. Little Jerry Osborne was also full of sympathy, though he expressed it rather often, and gave Chrystal more advice than he was likely to have the least opportunity of following. One excellent fellow happened to have played in a match, some seasons before, in which Chrystal had actually made runs; and he talked about that. He reminded Chrystal of it every day. "They were all from the middle of the bat. The man who took thirty-six like that may take a century any day. You've struck a bad patch, as we all do, and you've lost confidence; you shouldn't take it so seriously." A tall Quidnunc, who said little but made his hundred most days, did declare after Chrystal's congratulations (in the hour of his own disaster) upon one of them, that he was "absolutely the best sportsman in Europe"; the grave Indian major treated him with silent respect; and the young schoolmasters, who made up the team and did the deep-field business, agreed most piously with the Quidnunc.

The poor devil was a cricketer at the core. That was the hard part. And he knew the game as many a real cricketer does not; you never heard Chrystal disparage the ball that had just bowled him; neither was it ever "a ball that might have beaten Charles Fry." He always knew, none better, exactly what he had done, and (which was more galling) precisely what he ought to have done. If he had made a half-volley into a yorker, he was the first to tell you so. He knew when he had played across a plain straight one, when he had failed to swing his left foot far enough over, or played at the pitch of a long-hop. Even as the wicket rattled he was playing the stroke again, and with academic correctness, in his own mind. That was Chrystal's cricket. Then he would walk back swinging his glove, and beginning to smile when the maker of centuries begins to run—to smile all over a face that felt like a death's head. And that was the stuff of which the man was made.

¶

IT was the Friday night, and all the others were so pleased with themselves! Everybody else had at least one little achievement of his own to form a gratifying reflection, and to justify his place in the team. Chrystal could hear them in the billiard-room and at the piano, as for a few minutes he walked up and down outside, with the wife from whom he could not conceal his consuming chagrin.

"They're in great spirits!" Chrystal had exclaimed, with no bitterness in his voice, but with a whole tome of mortification. And his wife had pressed his arm; she had not made the mistake of going on to remind him that cricket was only a game, and that he could afford to fail at games.

"I believe you'll do better to-morrow," was what she did say, with a quiet conviction not unjustified by the doctrine of chances in the mind of a lady who declined to regard cricket as a game of skill.

"To-morrow!" Chrystal laughed outright. "Why, if one could score a minus, that's what I should make to-morrow!"

"Is there any special reason for saying that?"

"There is," said Chrystal grimly. "There's good old Tuttles against us, for a change. He'll bowl me neck and crop first ball!"

They took another turn in silence.

"I'm not sure," said Mrs. Chrystal, "that I quite like Mr. Tuthill."

"Not like old Tuttles? Why on earth not?"

"He has such a good opinion of himself."

"He has reason!" cried Chrystal, with hardly ten per cent. of envy in his loyal tone.

"Then I do think he's rather spiteful. To go and bowl you out first ball—if he did."

"He'd bowl me out if I was his long-lost brother! He's so keen; and quite right, too. You've got to play the game, dear."

If it had been the game of battle, murder, and sudden death, Chrystal's manner could not possibly have been more serious.

But a silence had fallen on piano and billiard-table; and Chrystal hurried indoors,

as he said, " to keep the ball rolling if I can't hit it." They were only talking about the final match, however, in which Chrystal played his gardeners and grooms, while little Osborne took the field against him with the like raw material from his own parish near Ware.

" It's all very well," said Chrystal, joining in the cricket talk that was beginning to get on his nerves ; " but I ought really to object to Tuttles, you know. He has neither the birth qualification nor the residential ; he isn't even your deputy-assistant-secretary, Jerry ! "

" I suppose you really don't object ? " said Tuttles himself, in the nicest way, the first time he and Chrystal were more or less alone.

" My dear fellow ! " was all Chrystal said in reply, " I want to see you take all the wickets," he added. " I promise you mine."

Tuthill smiled at the superfluous concession.

" I'll have to do my best," said he, as the hangman might of his painful duty. " But, as a matter of fact, I'm not sure that my best will amount to much to-morrow. I've been bowling a bit too much, and a bit too well. My off day's about due, and on my off day I'm a penny treat. Full-pitches to leg and long-hops into the slips ! "

Chrystal's mouth watered ! The second sort of ball was often fatal to him, but the first was the one delivery with which he was almost as much at home in practice as in theory. He had seldom run into double figures without the aid of the repeated full-pitch to leg.

It so happened that there was rain in the night, but only enough to improve a pitch which had quite fulfilled little Osborne's promise of fire ; and an absence of sun next day averted an even more insidious state of things. The last match was thus played on the worst day and the best wicket of the week. The ball came along stump-high without any tricks at all. Yet Osborne's side was out shortly after lunch for something under a hundred runs, of which Osborne himself made more than half. Tuthill, who did not take his batting seriously, but hit hard and clean as long as he was there, was beginning to look as though he never need get out when Chrystal, of all people, held him low down at point. It was a noble effort in a stout, slow man, but Tuthill walked away without a word. He was keen enough on his innings as long as he was in ; but at luncheon he was the first to compliment Chrystal, who had not been so happy all that week. Chrystal had written himself last in the order, but, thus encouraged, he was persuaded to give himself one more chance, and finally went in fourth wicket down.

It was then 3.20 by the clock on the little pavilion, and one of those grey, mild days which are neither close nor cold, and far from unpleasant on the cricket field. The four wickets had fallen for less than forty runs, but Tuthill had only one victim, and it really did appear to be his off day ; but he looked grim and inexorable enough as he waited by the umpire while Chrystal took centre and noted that it was now 3.21 ; at 3.22 he would be safe back in the pavilion, and his cricket troubles would be over for the season, if not for his life.

But the first ball was that wide long-hop of which Tuthill himself had spoken ; down it skimmed, small as a racket-ball to Chrystal's miserable eye ; he felt for it with half his heart, but luckily heard nothing before the dull impact of the ball in the gloves of an agile wicket-keeper standing back.

" No ! " cried the tall Quidnunc at the opposite end ; and Chrystal began to feel that he was playing an innings.

The second ball was the other infallible sign of Tuthill's off day ; it was a knee-high full-pitch just wide of Chrystal's pads ; and he succeeded in flicking it late and fine, so that it skimmed to the boundary at its own pace. For one wretched moment Chrystal watched the umpire, who happened to be the man who had advised him not to take his cricket so seriously, and who now read his anxiety in a flash.

" That was a hit ! " the unorthodox official shouted towards the scorers' table.

" And a jolly good one ! " added the tall Quidnunc, while more distant applause reached the striker's trembling ears, and the ardent Tuttles waited for the ball with the face of a handsome fiend. Yet his next was nothing deadlier than a slow half-volley outside the off-stump, which Chrystal played gently but firmly as a delicate stroke at billiards, but with the air of Greek meeting Greek. Already the ball was growing larger, and the time was 3.25.

Osborne was bowling at the other end ; he always was either batting, bowling, or keeping wicket ; but the bowler's was the only department of the game at which he

exposed a definite inferiority. He was, however, very fond of bowling, and as he could claim two of the four wickets which had already fallen (one having been run out), it was extremely unlikely that he would spare himself until the tenth one fell. Osborne's first over after Chrystal's arrival was one of his least expensive. The Quid drove him for a languid single, while Chrystal, after keeping out of mischief for four balls, sent the fifth high and dry through the slips for three. The stroke was a possible chance to none other than Tuthill, but it was not off his own bowling, and the impression upon the observant spectator must have been a bad one.

"Don't begin by running yourself off your legs," Chrystal's partner crossed over to advise him between the overs. "There's the whole afternoon before us, and you won't have many to run for me. I'm as limp as a wet rag, and my only chance of staying here is to sit on the splice while you punch 'em. But don't you be in any hurry; play yourself in."

If Chrystal had made a respectable score every day, the tone of the best batsman on the side could not have betrayed more confidence in him; he began to feel confidence, the ball swelled to normal size, and Tuttle's next long-hop went to third man for another sharp single. Chrystal apologized, but his partner had called him in response to an appealing look; evidently he was not too limp to run his captain's hits; it was only Chrystal himself who puffed and blew and leaned upon his bat.

And even by the half-hour he was within a run of that two-figure rubicon which he had not passed for two seasons; his face showed the pale determination of a grave endeavour; in fact, it would hurt him more to get out now than to fall as usual to his only ball.

Yet, what did happen? It was Tuthill's slow yorker, and Chrystal was in many minds from the time it left the bowler's hand; his good blade wagged irresolutely, and the odious projectile was under it in a twinkling. But at that instant the umpire threw up his arm with a yell, and Chrystal never heard the havoc behind him; he was only instinctively aware of it as he watched Tuthill turn upon a comrade who had donned the long white coat over his flannels.

"No *what?*" demanded the best bowler in second-class cricket.

"I said 'no ball'!"

"You're the first man who ever said it to me in my life," remarked Tuttles, deadly calm, while he looked the other up and down as a new species of cricket curiosity. Then he held up his hands for the ball. "There's a man still in," he cried; and proceeded to send down a perfectly vicious full-pitcher upon Chrystal's legs, which the captain, who had the single virtue of never running away, promptly despatched for another four.

He had now made thirteen runs in less than thirteen minutes, and already the whole world was a different place, and that part of it a part of paradise. He was emboldened to glance towards the seats: there was his dear wife strolling restlessly with her parasol, and their tiny boy clapping his hands. Chrystal could see how excited they were at a hundred yards; it only had the effect of making him perversely calm. "I'm all right—I've got going at last!" he felt tempted to sing out to them; for he felt all right. He had even passed the stage of anticipating the imminent delivery and playing at the ball he expected, instead of at the ball that came along. This had been one of Chrystal's many methods of getting rid of himself in the first over. And he had more suicidal strokes than an Indian Prince has scoring ones. But now he looked from his family in the long-field to the noble trees to square-leg, and from the trees downhill to the reservoir gleaming through third-man's legs; it was hardly credible that he had wished to drown himself in its depths both yesterday and the day before.

¶

THE worst player in the world, with his eye in, may resist indefinitely the attack of the best bowler; after all, a ball is a ball and a bat is a bat; and if you once begin getting the one continually in the middle of the other, and keeping it out of harm's way, there is no more to be said and but little to be done. Chrystal was soon meeting every ball in the middle of a bat which responded to the unparalleled experience by driving deliciously. The majority of his strokes were not ideal, though even a critical Cambridge Quid was able to add a stimulating "good shot!" to not a few, while some were really quite hard and clean. Never before had this batsman felt the bat leap in his hands and the ball spring from the blade beyond the confines of his wildest

hopes, at an unimagined velocity, half so often as he experienced these great sensations now. Great! What is there in the sensual world to put on the same page with them? And let your real batsman bear in mind that these divine moments, and their blessed memory, are greatest of all where they are most rare; in his heart who never had the makings of a real batsman, but who once in his life had played a decent game.

Chrystal was in heaven. No small boy succeeding in his first little match, no international paragon compiling his cool hundred before fifty thousand eyes, was ever granted the joy of the game in fuller or sweeter or more delirious measure than was Robert Chrystal that afternoon. Think of his failures. Think of his years. Think of his unathletic figure. Think of ball after ball—big as a football to him now—yet diminishing into thin air or down the hill or under the trees. "Thank God there's a boundary!" murmured Chrystal, wiping his face while they fetched it. Yet he was cool enough in the way that mattered. He had lost all thought of his score. His mind was entirely concentrated on the coming ball; but it was an open mind until the ball arrived. If his thoughts wandered between the overs, it was back to Harrow, and to the pleasing persuasion that he might have been in the eleven but for his infernal ineptitude for Latin verses. Meanwhile, every ball brought its own anxiety and delight. And for several overs there was really very little to criticize except his style; then came an awful moment.

It was a half-volley on his legs, and Chrystal hit it even higher than he intended, but not quite so hard. One of those vigorous young schoolmasters was keeping himself hard and fit at deep mid-on; he had to run like a greyhound, and to judge a cross flight as he ran; but the apparent impossibility of the catch was simply a challenge to the young schoolmaster's calibre as a field; the ground was just covered, and the ball just held with extended hand. It was a supreme effort—or would have been. There are those catches which are held almost, but not quite, long enough to count. This was an exaggerated instance. Unable to check himself, the young schoolmaster must have covered at least a yard with the ball in his hand. Then it rolled out, and he kicked it far in front of him in his headlong stride.

"Got him! No, he hasn't! Put him on the floor!" Chrystal heard the little parson say, as he himself charged down the pitch in his second run. He saw nothing. His partner was calling him for a third, and Tuttles was stamping and raving at the bowler's end.

"Was that a chance?" gasped Chrystal, as he grounded his bat.

"A chance?" snorted Tuttles. "My dear fellow, he only held it about twenty minutes!"

"Am I out then?" asked Chrystal of the umpire, his hot blood running cold.

"Not out!" declared that friendly functionary without an instant's indecision. "But I wouldn't appeal against myself, old chap! It's sporting, but it isn't war."

The incident, however, had a disturbing effect upon Chrystal's nerves. He shuddered to think of his escape. He became self-conscious, and began to think about his score. It was quite a long time since they clapped him for his fifty. He must be in the eighties at the very least. On his own ground he would have the public scoring apparatus that they have at Lord's; then you would always know when you were near your century. Chrystal, however, was well aware that he must be pretty near his. He had hit another four, not one of his best, and had given a stumping chance to little Osborne, who had more than once exchanged the ball for the gloves during the past two hours.

Yes, it was a quarter past five. Chrystal saw that, and pulled himself together, for his passive experience of the game reminded him that the average century is scored in a couple of hours. No doubt he must be somewhere about the nineties. Everybody seemed very still in the pavilion. The scorer's table was certainly surrounded. Chrystal set his teeth, and smothered a half-volley in his earlier no-you-don't manner. But the next ball could only have bowled him round his legs, and Tuttles hardly ever broke that way, besides which, this one was too fast, and, in short, away it went skimming towards the trees. And there and then arose the sweetest uproar that Robert Chrystal had ever heard in all his life.

They were shouting themselves hoarse in front of the little pavilion. The group about the scoring table was dispersing with much hat-waving. The scorer might have been seen leaning back in his chair like a man who had been given air at last. Mrs. Chrystal was embracing the boy, probably

(and in fact) to hide her joyous tears. Chrystal himself felt almost overcome, and quite abashed. Should he take his cap off or should he not? He would know better another time; meanwhile he meant to look modest, and did look depressed; and half the field closed in upon him, clapping their unselfish hands, while a pair of wicket-keeping gloves belaboured his back with ostentatious thuds.

More magnanimous than the rest, Tuttles had been the first to clap, but he was also the first to stop clapping, and there was a business air about the way in which he signalled for the ball. He carried it back to the spot where he started his run with as much deliberation as though measuring the distance for an opening over. There was peculiar care also in the way in which he grasped the leather, rolling it affectionately in his hand, as though wiping off the sawdust which it had not been necessary to use since the morning. There was a grim light in his eye as he stood waiting to begin his run, a subtle something in the run itself, the whole reminding one, with a sudden and characteristic emphasis, that this really was the first bowler in second-class cricket. A few quick steps, firm and precise; a couple of long ones, a beautiful swing, a lovely length, and Chrystal's middle stump lay s retched upon the grass.

It was a great end to a great innings, a magnificent finale to a week of weeks; but on the charming excesses on the field I shall touch no more than on the inevitable speeches that night at dinner. Field and house alike were full of good hearts, of hearts good enough to appreciate a still better one. Tuthill's was the least expansive; but he had the critical temperament, and he had been hit for many fours, and his week's analysis had been ruined in an afternoon.

"I wasn't worth a sick headache," he told Chrystal himself, with his own delightful mixture of frankness and contempt. "I couldn't have outed the biggest sitter in Christendom."

"But you did send down some pretty good ones, you know!" replied Chrystal, with a rather wistful intonation.

"A few," Tuttles allowed charily. "The one that bowled you was all right. But it was a very good innings, and I congratulate you again."

Now Chrystal had some marvellous old brandy; how it had come into his possession, and how much it was worth, were, respectively, a very long and rather a tall story. He only broached a bottle upon very great occasions; but this was obviously one, even though the bottle had been the last in the cellar, and its contents liquid gold. The only question was whether they should have it on the table with dessert or with their coffee in the study?

Chrystal debated the point with some verbosity; the fact was that he had been put to shame by hearing and speaking of nothing but his century from the soup to the speeches; and he resolutely introduced and conscientiously enlarged upon the topic of the brandy in order to throw a deliberate haze over his own lustre. His character shone the more brilliantly through it; but that could be said of each successive incident since his great achievement. He beamed more than ever. In a sudden silence you would have expected to catch him purring. And Mrs. Chrystal had at last agreed to his giving her those particular diamonds which she had over and over again dissuaded him from buying: if he must make some offering to his earthly gods it might as well be to the goddess on the hearth. But none but themselves knew of this, and it was of the Chrystal known to men as well that all sat talking when he had left the dining-room with his bunch of keys. Mrs. Chrystal felt the tears coming back into her eyes; they were every one so fond of him, and yet he was all and only hers! It was she who made the move, and for this reason, though she said she fancied he must be expecting them to follow him to the study, for he had been several minutes gone. But Mrs. Chrystal led the other ladies to the drawing-room, merely pausing to say generally to the men:

"If you don't find him there, he must have gone to the cellar himself, and I'm afraid he's having a hunt."

Now the Chrystals, like a sensible couple, never meddled with each other's definite departments in the house, and, of course, Mrs. Chrystal knew no more about her husband's cellar arrangements than he did of the inside of her store-room. Otherwise she would have known that he very seldom entered his own cellar, and that he did not require to go there for his precious brandy.

Yet he did seem to have gone there now, for there was no sign of him in the study when the cricketers trooped in. Osborne was saying something in a lowered voice

to Tuthill, who, looking round the empty room, replied as emphatically as usual.

"I'm glad you think I did it well. Man and boy, I never took on such a job in all my days, and I never will another. The old sitter!"

And he chuckled good-humouredly enough.

"Steady!" said the major of the Indian regiment.

"It's all right, he's down in the cellar," the little clergyman explained. "Trust us not to give the show away."

"And me," nodded the scholastic hero of the all-but-gallery-catch.

"You precious near did!" Osborne remonstrated. "You held it just two seconds too long."

"But fancy holding *it* at all! I never thought I could get near the thing. I thought a bit of a dash would contribute to the general verisimilitude. Then to make the catch of a lifetime, and to have to drop it like a hot potato!"

"It showed the promising quality of self-restraint," the clerical humorist allowed. "You will be an upper usher yet."

"Or a husher upper?" suggested a wag of baser mould, to wit the sympathetic umpire of the afternoon. "But your side-show wasn't a patch on mine. Even Osborne admits that you had two seconds to think about it. I hadn't the fifth of one. Tuttles, old man, I thought you were going to knock me down!"

"I very nearly did," the candid bowler owned. "I never was no-balled in my life before, and for the moment I forgot."

"Then it wasn't all acting?"

"Half and half."

"I thought it was too good to be untrue."

"But," continued Tuttles, with his virile vanity, "you fellows buck about what you did, as though you'd done, between you, a thousandth part of what I did. You had your moment apiece. I had one every ball of every over. Great Lord! if I'd known how hard it would be to bowl tosh. Full-pitches on the pads! That's a nice length to have to live up to through a summer afternoon. I wouldn't do it again for five-and-twenty golden sovereigns!"

"And I," put in the quiet Quidnunc. "It's the first time I ever sat on the splice while the other man punched them, and I hope it's the last."

He had been tried as a bat for an exceptionally strong Cambridge eleven.

"Come, come," said the grave major. "I wasn't in this myself. I distinctly disapproved. But he played quite well when he got his eye in. I don't believe you could have bowled him then if you'd tried."

If the irascible Tuthill had been a stout old man he would have turned purple in the face; being a lean young one, at least in effect, his complexion gained a glorious bronze.

"My good sir," said he, "what about the ball after the one which ran him into three figures?"

"Where *is* the dear old rabbit?" the ex-umpire exclaimed.

"Well, not in the hutch," said the little parson. "He's come right out of that, and I shouldn't be surprised if he stopped out. I only wish it was the beginning of the week."

"I'm going to look for him," the other rejoined, with the blank eye that has not seen a point. He stepped through a french window out into the night. The young schoolmaster followed him. The Indian major detained Osborne.

"We ought to make a rule not to speak of this again. It would be too horrible if it leaked out!"

"I suppose it would." The little parson had become more like one. Though full of cricket and of chaff, and gifted with a peculiarly lay vocabulary for the due ventilation of his favourite topic, he was yet no discredit to the cloth. A certain superficial insincerity was his worst fault; the conspiracy, indeed, had originated in his nimble mind; but its execution had far exceeded his conception. On the deeper issues the man was sound.

"Can there be any doubt?" the major pursued.

"About the momentary bitter disappointment, no, I'm afraid not; about the ultimate good all round, no again; but there I don't fear, I hope."

"I don't quite follow you," said the major.

"Old Bob Chrystal," continued Osborne, "is absolutely the best sportsman in the world, and absolutely the dearest good chap. But until this afternoon I never thought he would get within a hundred miles of decent cricket; and now I almost think he might, even at his age. He has had the best practice he ever had in his life. His shots improved as he went on. You saw for yourself how he put on the wood. It is

a liberal education to make runs, even against the worst bowling in the world. Like most other feats, you find it's not half so formidable as it looks, once you get going; every ten runs come easier than the last. Chrystal got a hundred this afternoon because we let him. I said just now I wished it was the beginning of the week. Don't you see my point?"

The major looked a brighter man.

"You think he might get another!"

"I don't mind betting he does," said the little parson, "if he sticks to country cricket long enough. *Possunt quia posse videntur!*"

They went out in their turn; and Chrystal himself at last stole forth from the deep cupboard in which he kept his cigars and his priceless brandy. An aged bottle still trembled in his hand; but a little while ago his lip had been trembling also, and now it was not. Of course, he had not understood a word of the little clergyman's classical tag; but all that immediately preceded it had made, or may make, nearly all the difference to the rest even of his successful life.

His character had been in the balance during much of what had passed in his hearing, and yet behind his back; whether it would have emerged triumphant, even without Gerald Osborne's final pronouncement, is for others to judge from what they have seen of it in this little record.

"It was most awfully awkward," so Chrystal told his wife. "I was in there getting at the brandy—I'd gone and crowded it up with all sorts of tackle—when you let all those fellows into the study, and they began talking about me before I could give the alarm. Then it was too late. It would have made them so uncomfortable, and I should have looked so mean."

"I hope they were saying nice things?"

"Oh, rather; but don't you let them know I overheard them, mind."

Mrs. Chrystal seemed the least bit suspicious.

"About your century, darling?"

"Well, partly. It was little Osborne you know. He knows more about cricket than any of them. Tuttles is only a bowler."

"I *don't* like him," said Mrs. Chrystal. "I've quite made up my mind. He was trying to bowl you out the whole time."

"Little Osborne," her husband continued, rather hastily, "says I ought to make a hundred—another hundred—if I stick to it."

"But of course you will," said Mrs. Chrystal, who just then would have taken Chrystal's selection for England as a matter of course.

Her husband was blushing a little, but glowing more. It was one of those moments when you would have understood his making so much money and winning such. Never was a mouth so determined, and yet so good.

"I don't know about that, dear," he opened it to say. "But I mean to try!"

To Chloe

THERE are two births; the one when light
First strikes the new awaken'd sense;
The other when two souls unite,
And we must count our life from thence:
When you loved me and I loved you,
Then both of us were born anew.

Love then to us new souls did give,
And in those souls did plant new powers;
Since when another life we live,
The breath we breathe is his, not ours:
Love makes those young whom age doth chill,
And whom he finds young keeps young still.

WILLIAM CARTWRIGHT.

The Optimist Sees It Through

The Ideal is Within You

THE Situation that has not its Duty, its Ideal, was never yet occupied by man. Yes, here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy Ideal; work it out therefrom; and working, believe, live, be free. Fool! the Ideal is in thyself, the impediment too is in thyself: thy condition is but the stuff thou art to shape the same Ideal out of: what matters whether such stuff is of this sort or that, so the Form thou give it be heroic, be poetic? O thou that pinest in the imprisonment of the Actual, and criest bitterly to the gods for a kingdom wherein to rule and create, know this of a truth: the thing thou seekest is already with thee, "Here or nowhere," couldst thou only see! Thomas Carlyle.

ART thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?
O sweet content!
Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplex'd?
O punishment!
Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vex'd
To add to golden numbers golden numbers?
O sweet content! O sweet, O sweet content!
Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face;
Then hey nonny nonny—hey nonny nonny!

Can'st drink the waters of the crispèd spring?
O sweet content!
Swim'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears?
O punishment!
Then he that patiently want's burden bears,
No burden bears, but is a King, a King!
O sweet content! O sweet, O sweet content!
Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face;
Then hey nonny nonny—hey nonny nonny! Thomas Dekker.

Getting the Best Out of Life

THERE is not a dream which may not come true, if we have the energy which makes, or chooses, our own fate. We can always, in this world, get what we want, if we will it intensely and persistently enough. Whether we shall get it sooner or later is the concern of fate; but we shall get it. It may come when we no longer have any use for it, when we have gone on willing it out of habit, or so as not to confess we have failed. But it will come. So few people succeed greatly because so few people can conceive a great end, and work towards that end without deviating and without tiring. But we all know the man that works for money day and night gets rich; and the man who works day and night for no matter what kind of material power, gets the power. It is the same with deeper, more spiritual, as it seems vaguer issues, which make for happiness and every intangible success. It is only the dreams of those light sleepers who dream faintly that do not come true. We get out of life, all of us, what we bring to it; and that, and that only, is what it can teach us. Arthur Symons.

The Power of Hope

HOPE, they say, deserts us at no period of our existence. From first to last, and in the face of smarting disillusions, we continue to expect good fortune, better health, and better conduct; and that so confidently, that we judge it needless to deserve them. I think it improbable that I shall ever write like Shakespeare, conduct an army like Hannibal, or distinguish myself like Marcus Aurelius in the paths of virtue; and yet I have my by-days, hope promptings, when I am very ready to believe that I shall combine all these various excellencies in my own person, and go marching down to posterity with divine honours. There is nothing so monstrous but we can believe it of ourselves.

R. L. Stevenson.

LIVES of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time. . . .

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

H. W. Longfellow.

The Sunshine of Cheerfulness

ONE is much less sensible of cold on a bright day, than on a cloudy. Thus the sunshine of cheerfulness and hope will lighten every trouble. Augustus J. C. Hare.

Mr. Micawber Says a Few Words

"MY dear Copperfield," said Mr. Micawber, rising with one of his thumbs in each of his waistcoat pockets, "the companion of my youth: if I may be allowed the expression—and my esteemed friend Traddles: if I may be permitted to call him so—will allow me, on the part of Mrs. Micawber, myself, and our offspring, to thank them in the warmest and most uncompromising terms for their good wishes. It may be expected that on the eve of a migration which will consign us to a perfectly new existence," Mr. Micawber spoke as if they were going five hundred thousand miles, "I should offer a few valedictory remarks to those such friends as I see before me. But all that I have to say in this way, I have said. Whatever station in life I may attain, through the medium of the learned profession of which I am about to become an unworthy member, I shall endeavour not to disgrace, and Mrs. Micawber will be safe to adorn. Under the temporary pressure of pecuniary liabilities, contracted with a view to their ultimate liquidation, but remaining unliquidated through a combination of circumstances, I have been under the necessity of assuming a garb from which my natural instincts recoil—I allude to spectacles—and possessing myself of a cognomen, to which I can establish no legitimate pretensions. All I have to say on that score is, that the cloud has passed from the dreary scene, and the God of Day is once more high upon the mountain tops. On Monday next, on the arrival of the four o'clock afternoon coach at Canterbury, my foot will be on my native heath—my name, Micawber!"

Charles Dickens.

The Best Use of Fate

HE has not learned the lesson of life who does not every day surmount a fear. I do not wish to put myself or any man into a theatrical position, or urge him to ape the courage of his comrade. Have the courage not to adopt another's courage. There is scope and cause and resistance enough for us in our proper work and circumstance. And there is no creed of an honest man, be he Christian, Turk, or Gentoo, which does not equally preach it. If you have no faith in beneficent power above you, but see only an adamantine fate coiling its folds about nature and man, then reflect that the best use of fate is to teach us courage, if only because baseness cannot change the appointed event. If you accept your thoughts as inspirations from the Supreme Intelligence, obey them when they prescribe difficult duties, because baseness cannot change the appointed event. If you accept your thoughts as inspirations from the Supreme Intelligence, obey them when they prescribe difficult duties, because they come only so long as they are used; or, if your scepticism reaches to the last verge, and you have no confidence in any foreign mind, then be brave, because there is one good opinion which must always be of consequence to you, namely, your own. R. W. Emerson.

AUSPICIOUS Hope! in thy sweet garden grow
Wreaths for each toil, a charm for every woe;
Won by their sweets, in Nature's languid hour,
The way-worn pilgrim seeks thy summer bower;
There, as the wild bees murmur on the wing,
What peaceful dreams thy handmaid spirits bring!
What viewless forms th' Æolian organ play,
And sweep the furrow'd lines of anxious thought away.
Angel of life! thy glittering wings explore
Earth's loveliest bounds, and Ocean's wildest shore.
Lo! to the wintry winds the pilot yields
His bark careering o'er unfathom'd fields;
Now on Atlantic waves he rides afar,
Where Andes, giant of the western star,
With meteor standard to the winds unfurl'd,
Looks from his throne of clouds o'er half the world!

Thomas Campbell.

Pilgrim's Haven

NOW I saw in my dream, that by the time the pilgrims were got out of the Enchanted Ground; and entering into the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant, the way lying directly through it, they solaced themselves there for a season; yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair, neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle.

John Bunyan.

Acknowledgments: *Arthur Symons: William Heinemann, Ltd.; R. L. Stevenson: Chatto & Windus.*

Slim-Fingered Jim

"His hands and his eyes—that's what I remember"

By ANTHONY HOPE

"WHAT did he get?" I asked. I had been working in my own room all the morning and had not seen the papers—they arrived from London about half-past eleven.

"Seven years' penal servitude," said our host the Major with grim satisfaction.

"Stiff!" I commented.

"Not a bit too much," asserted the Major, helping himself to game pie again—he is a good luncher. "He's a thoroughly bad lot—a professional thief, and a deuced clever one. It's his first conviction, but it ought to have been his tenth, I should say."

"He was certainly in that big American bond robbery," said Crookes, "though he got off that time. Oxford man, wasn't he?"

"Yes. In fact, I believe I was up one term with him," said Millington. "I must have seen him, I think, but I can't remember him."

"Dear, dear!" our hostess observed, shocked apparently at this close proximity to the criminal classes.

"Rather good what the chap said when he'd been sentenced," drawled Charlie Pryce. "See it? Well, he bowed to the judge, and then he bowed to the jury, and smiled, and shrugged his shoulders, and said: 'The risks of the profession, gentlemen! *Au revoir!*' Jolly good cheek!" Charlie's round red face—he is very well nourished, as they say at inquests—beamed almost sympathetically.

"I suppose he owes his nickname to his professional dexterity?" said I.

"Suppose so," agreed Charlie.

"No," said Mrs. Pryce, who was at the other end of the table. "His name is James——"

"Yes, James Painter Walsh," interposed the Major, accurate always.

"But he was called 'Slim-Fingered' because he had beautiful hands with very slender tapering fingers."

"Hallo, Minnie!" cried Pryce. "How do you know that?"

"He told me himself," she answered with a smile and the hint of a blush. "I crossed from America with him the time he was arrested at Queenstown for the bond robbery, and—well, we got acquainted. Of course nobody knew who he was."

A torrent of questions overwhelmed Mrs. Pryce. She had achieved fame—she had known the hero of the last great jewel robbery. She spoke of him from first-hand knowledge. The unrivalled attraction of crime—crime in the grand manner—fascinates us all. But she wouldn't say much.

"He was just an acquaintance for the voyage," she told us; "though, of course, it was rather a shock when he was arrested at Queenstown."

"Oh, what a surprise!" exclaimed Charlie Pryce jovially.

"A surprise?" She seemed to me to start ever so little. "Oh yes, of course—terrible!" she went on the next instant.

"Was he nice?" asked our hostess.

"Yes, he was very—very attractive," she answered. And somehow I fancy her glance rested for a moment on her husband—indeed on a particular portion of him.

Charlie was just lighting the after-lunch cigarette. Charlie's hands—he is a very good fellow and well off—are decidedly red and particularly podgy.

II

I LIKED Mrs. Pryce very much. She was pretty, dainty, bright, and—well, bachelors are so apt to think that pretty married women have a dull time at home that I will lay no stress on my own private opinion as to her domestic lot. Enough that I was always glad to talk with her, and that it was pleasant to walk with her in the Major's quiet old garden on a fine night when the wind stirred the boughs and the moon

shone. Inside they had taken to pool—and whisky-and-soda. I play the former badly, and take the latter when the evening is more advanced.

"Beautiful moon!" I observed, enjoying Nature, my company, and my cigar.

She was silent a moment. Then she said: "It shone just like that the third night out from New York."

"Your last trip?" She crosses pretty often, as Charlie has business connexions on the other side.

"No. The one when—the one we were talking about at lunch."

"Ah! When our friend of the slim fingers——?"

"Yes."

"Let's sit down," I suggested. We were just passing a garden seat.

She smiled at me half sadly, half mockingly. She saw through me; she knew I wanted to hear more about it. By some sort of sympathy I knew that she wanted to talk about it. It was queer, too, to consider through what window that moon was shining on Slim-Fingered Jim. Did it—and his other surroundings—remind him of the broad Atlantic? "The risks of the profession, gentlemen!"

"Yes, he had beautiful hands," she murmured.

"What'll they look like when——?"

She caught my hand sharply in hers. "Hush, hush!" she whispered. I felt ashamed of myself, but of course I couldn't have known that—well, that she'd feel it like that.

"I was quite a girl," she went on presently. "Yes, it's six years ago—and the first two days of that voyage were like days in heaven. You know what it can be when it's fine? You seem never to have known what space was before—and bigness—and blueness. Do you know what I mean?"

"It's very exhilarating."

"Oh, don't be silly! Of course nobody was ill—anyhow only the people who meant to be before they started—and we had an awfully jolly table."

"Mr. Walsh one of your party?"

"Yes, he was at our table. I—sat next to him."

I turned half round and looked at her. The moon was strong, I could see her eyes.

"Look here, do you want to go on with this story?" I asked.

"Yes, I think so—I've never told it before. But perhaps I'll skip a little of it."

"At the beginning?"

"Yes. Will you imagine the sun shining by day and the moon by night?"

"Yes. And a sparkling sea? And nothing to do?"

"Yes. And a young girl—quite a young girl?"

"Yes. And beautiful hands—and the rest to match?"

"Yes—including a voice?"

"Yes. Let's skip to the second evening, shall we, Mrs. Pryce?"

"Will you be a little more imaginative and skip to the third afternoon?"

"The third afternoon be it. What's happening when we begin the story again?"

"I'm in my mother's state-room, getting a tremendous lecture. I'm not sure you ought to hear it."

"Oh, I know all about it. You meant no harm, probably, but really it was time you learnt to be more careful. Attractive girls couldn't be too careful. Men were so ready to think this and that—and say this and that—and then go and boast about it in the smoking-room. And what did you or your mother know about him? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! No doubt he was a gentleman, and very pleasant and amusing—but really you knew nothing. He was probably an adventurer. And anyhow—well, really it wasn't quite—not *quite*—ladylike to—to——"

"Yes, that's not a bad imagination," interrupted Mrs. Pryce "Add mamma's pince-nez, and it's quite life-like."

"And the result?"

"Great constraint in my manner towards Mr. Walsh at dinner that evening."

"And—further result—a melancholy walk by you on the deck after dinner—a walk at first solitary—subsequently shared by a puzzled and humble Mr. Walsh?"

"I begin to think you have more experience than you always admit," said Mrs. Pryce. "But I think you'll go wrong if you try to guess any more."

"Then I won't guess any more. Take up the thread. It's now the third night out, and the moon is shining like that." I pointed to the orb which was illuminating the Major's garden—among other places where sundry of that liner's former passengers might chance to be.

"I'll go on," she said, "and don't interrupt me for a little while. There was a

very light wind—you hardly felt it aft—and I was standing looking over the sea. He came up to me and began to talk about some trifle—I forget what it was, but it doesn't matter. But I was afraid mamma would come up and look for me, so I said I was going down to read. But I waited for just a minute more—I suppose I expected him to ask me not to go. He said nothing, but took one big pull at his cigar, gave one big, big puff of smoke out of his mouth and nose, and then threw the cigar overboard. 'Good night, Mr. Walsh,' I said. He looked at me—it was as light as it is now—and said: 'Will you give me one minute, Miss Cochrane?' 'Well, only a minute,' I said, smiling. I was really afraid about mamma. 'I want to tell you something,' he said. I wonder if I blushed—and whether he could see if I did. I expect I did, and that he saw, because he went on very quickly; 'Something that doesn't matter to you, but matters a bit to me.' 'Go on,' I said. I was quite calm again now, because—well, because I saw he was going to say something serious—I mean, not of the sort I—I had thought he might be going to say before."

"You saw he wasn't making love to you, you mean?"

"I told you not to interrupt—but I dare say that's putting it as nearly right as you can understand."

I murmured thanks for this rather contemptuous forgiveness.

"Then he told me," Mrs. Pryce went on, "just simply told me—and said he was going to make some excuse for asking the purser to put him at another table."

"But you can't leave it like that!" I expostulated. "You're throwing away all your dramatic effect. What did he say? His words, his words, Mrs. Pryce!"

"He didn't use any—not in the sense you mean. He just told me. He didn't even put me on my honour not to tell anybody else. He said he didn't care a hang about anybody else on board, but that he wanted to spare me any possible shock, and that he'd been concerned in the bond robbery and would probably be arrested at Queenstown, but that he expected to get off this time. I think I repeated 'This time!' because I remember he said then that he was a thief by profession, and couldn't expect good luck every time. That was like what he said yesterday, wasn't it?"

"And what did you say? It must have been a bad quarter of an hour for you. Because you'd liked him a good deal, hadn't you?"

"Yes, a lot. But"—she turned to me, smiling now—"it wasn't bad at all, really."

She gave a little laugh—a laugh with pleasant reminiscence in it.

"You were a cool hand for your age," I ventured to observe.

"It was the way he did it," she said. "Somehow I felt he was paying me a very high compliment."

"Oh, I agree," I laughed.

"And one I was glad to have. It must have been the way he did it. There are some people who abolish one's moral scruples, aren't there? He was very quiet generally, but he had a way of just moving those hands of his with a little waving gesture. And when he said that of course it wasn't right——"

"Oh, he admitted that?"

"Yes, but that little wave of those hands seemed to wave right and wrong right out of the way."

"Overboard?"

"Absolutely overboard. Then he looked at me a moment and said: 'That's all I had to say. Thanks for listening to me, Miss Cochrane. Good night.'"

"And what did you say?"

She rested her chin in her hand, looking side ways at me.

"I said: 'Good night, Mr. Walsh. We meet at breakfast to-morrow as usual?'"

"The deuce you did!"

"'At our table?' he asked. And I said 'Yes.' He gave a little laugh, and so did I, and I held out my hand. He shook hands and left me, and I went down and read with mamma."

"Nothing else said?"

"He said nothing else. I believe I whispered: 'It'll be rather fun—because you *will* get off!' But I know I didn't say anything more than that."

There was a pause. I lit another cigarette, snatching a mean advantage by stealing a look at my friend in the light of the match. She was not looking at me, but straight ahead of her: there was a pensive smile on her lips.

"And what happened afterwards?" I asked.

"I suppose you'll be shocked?"

"Being shocked is an emotion hostile to art—I never have it."

"Well, then, I never had such fun. Of

course we were careful, because of mamma (mamma's idea became funny too!), and because we knew what was going to happen. But we managed to get no end of talks in quiet places—the library's very good in fine weather—and he told me all sorts of wonderful things. It was like reading the very best detective stories, only ever so much better—so much more vivid, you know."

"More personal interest?"

"A thousand times! And it was fun, too, at meals, and when there was a concert, and so on. I used to find him looking at me, with his eyes all full of laughter; and I looked back at him, enjoying the secret and the way he was making fools of all the rest. We were just like two children with some game that the grown-up people know nothing about."

"He had waved your morality overboard with a vengeance," said I.

"It was the jolliest time I ever had in my life," said Mrs. Pryce. "He recited beautifully at the concert—'The Ballad of Beau Brocade.'"

"Well done him!" I said approvingly. I began rather to like the fellow myself.

"And at the end he made a little speech, thanking the captain, and saying how sorry we should all be when the voyage ended. 'And nobody sorrier than myself,' he said, with one of his looks at me—such a twinkling look—and a tiny wave of those hands."

"He must have been the most popular man on board?"

"Well, the men thought him rather stand-offish; he snubbed some of them, I think. Well, you do meet some queer men on a liner, don't you? And Mr. Walsh said that out of business hours he claimed to choose his acquaintance. But the women all worshipped him—not that he ran after them, but his manner was always just right to them."

"It's really a pity his manner of life was so—well, so unconventional."

"Yes, wasn't it?" she said, welcoming my sympathy. "Because, of course, it meant that our acquaintance had to end with the voyage."

I had, perhaps, been thinking of somewhat broader considerations, but I refrained from advancing them. In fact, we had somehow got away from ordinary standards and restraints; the memory of Slim-Fingered Jim had waved them away. We fell into silence for a moment or two, until I asked—

"And the manner of the end? Tell me that."

"I didn't believe in the end. I had got not to believe in it at all. I thought we might go on sailing for ever over that beautiful sea and having the most splendid fun. He could make you feel that everything was just splendid fun—that there was nothing else in the world. He made me feel that—I suppose he knew he could, or he'd never have told me his secret at all. But, of course, the end had to come.' She sighed and gave a little shiver—not that it was cold in the Major's garden. Then she turned to me again. "I've told you a good deal," she said, "and you're not a chicken, are you?"

I ruefully admitted that I was no chicken.

"Then I needn't say anything more about myself," said she.

"And what about him?"

"I think he liked me tremendously; but he wasn't in love."

"Not at all?"

"I don't think so. He was just the most perfect of good comrades to me—and in that way the finest gentleman I've ever met. Because, you know, I can see now that I gave him opportunities of being something else. Well, I was only nineteen, and——"

"Quite so. The hands, of course!"

"It seems possible to be good and bad in—in compartments, doesn't it? That's rather curious!"

"If true!"

"Oh, you know it's true!"

"Perhaps I do; but I never contradict the preacher."

She laughed again, but now a trifle fretfully.

"In his own business I believe he's thoroughly bad."

"Not even the chivalrous highwayman?"

"No. Just bad—bad—bad."

"Ah, well, business is one thing and charity another, as somebody once observed. And now for the end, please—because ends do come, even though we don't believe in them."

"Yes, they do; and this one came," she said. But for an instant or two she did not begin to tell me about it; and in the silence I heard Charlie Pryce assert loudly that he had made a good shot.

III

AT lunch on Friday," Mrs. Pryce resumed, "the steward told us that we were expected to reach Queenstown about one o'clock in the morning, and we all began discussing whether we should sit up. The old travellers scoffed at the idea, and mamma, though she wasn't an old traveller, said she would never think of being so silly. But I and the two other girls at the table—they were Americans on their first trip over—said that we certainly should, and one of them asked Mr. Walsh if he meant to. 'I must,' he said, smiling. 'In fact, I expect to land there—that is, if I get the telegram I expect to get.' Of course he glanced at me as he spoke, so that I knew what he meant, though the others hadn't the least idea. What would they have said?"

"I suppose they did say they were very sorry he wasn't going on to Liverpool?"

"Yes, and even mamma said how sorry we were to part from him. Fancy mamma saying that! It was fun! Only after lunch she was terribly aggravating; she kept me down in the writing-room all the afternoon, writing letters for her to all sorts of stupid people in America and at home, saying we'd arrived safely. Of course we'd arrived safely! But if mamma so much as crosses the Channel without sinking, she writes to all her friends as if she'd come back from the North Pole. Some people are like that, aren't they?"

"Yes; and they're generally considered attentive. You may get a great reputation for good manners by writing unnecessary letters."

'Yes. So I didn't see him again till dinner. Nothing much happened then—at least I don't remember much. The end had begun, I think, and I wasn't feeling so jolly as I had been all the way across. But everybody else was in high spirits, and he was the gayest of all of us. I expect he saw that I was rather blue, and he followed me on deck soon after dinner, and there we had our last little talk. He told me that he thought everything would be done quite quietly; he meant to tell the purser where to find him in case of inquiry, and to be ready to go ashore at once. He was sure they'd take him ashore; but if by chance they didn't, he would stay in his cabin, so that, anyhow, this was 'Good-bye.' So I said 'Good-bye' and wished him good luck. 'Are you going to sit up?' he said. I looked at him for a moment and then said 'No.' He smiled in an apologetic sort of way and gave that little wave of his hands. 'It's foolish of me to care, I suppose, but—thank you for that.' I was a little surprised, because I really hadn't thought he would mind me seeing; but I was pleased too. He held out both his hands, and I took them and pressed them. Then I opened my hands and looked at his as they lay there. He was smiling at me with his lips and his eyes. 'Slim-Fingered Jim!' he whispered. 'Don't quite forget him, little friend.' 'I suppose I shall never see you again?' I said. 'Better not,' he told me. 'But let's remember this voyage. We'll put a little fence round it, won't we? and keep all the rest of life out, and just let this stand by itself—on its own merits. Shall we, dear little friend?'"

Mrs. Pryce stayed her narrative for a moment. But my curiosity was merciless.

"What did you say?" I asked.

"I don't know. I think I murmured something like 'Oh, my dear, my dear!' and then I let go of his hands and turned away to the sea; and when I looked round again, he was gone."

"And that was the end?"

"No. The end was lying in the berth above mamma, who was sound asleep, and—well, snoring rather—lying there and feeling the ship slowing down and then stopping, and hearing the mail-boat come alongside, and all the noise and the shouting and the bustle. I knew I could hear nothing—there would be nothing to hear—but I couldn't help listening. I listened very hard all the time, but of course I heard nothing; and at last—after hours and hours, as it seemed—we began to move again. That was the real end. I knew it had happened then; and so it had. He wasn't at breakfast. But luckily nobody on the ship—none of the passengers, I mean—found out about it till we got to Liverpool; and as mamma and I weren't going on to London, it didn't matter."

"And he got off?"

"Yes, he got off—that time."

"I'm afraid this great man had one foible," I observed. "He was proud of those hands! Well, Cæsar didn't like getting bald, so I learnt at school."

"I always remember them as they lay in mine," she said. "His hands and his eyes—that's what I remember."

"Ever seen him again?"

"Of course not." She sat where she was for a moment longer, then rose. "Shall we go in?"

"I think we may as well," said I.

So we went into the billiard-room. They were still playing pool. I made for the whisky-and-soda and mixed myself a tumbler and drank thereof. When I set the tumbler down and turned round to the table Charlie Pryce was engaged in making a shot of critical importance.

Everybody was looking at him. His wife was standing at the end of the table and looking at him too. She seemed as much interested in the shot as any of them. But was she? For before he played she raised her eyes and looked across at me with a queer little smile. I couldn't help returning it.

I knew what she was thinking. The billiard-table is a high trial.

When Charlie had brought off his shot—which he did triumphantly—his wife came and kissed him. This pleased him very much. He did not recognize the Kiss Penitential, which is, however, a well-ascertained variety.

I'm afraid that the magnetic current of immorality which seemed to emanate from Mr. James Painter Walsh passed through the sympathetic medium of Mrs. Pryce's memory and infected, in some small degree, my more hardened intellect; for even now I can't help hoping that Slim-Fingered Jim is being put to some light form of labour. But it's a difficult business! Even the laundry—a most coveted department, as I am given to understand—would spoil them hopelessly.

Different Points of View

IT is impossible to enjoy idling thoroughly unless one has plenty to do.
—JEROME K. JEROME.

MEN in all ways are better than they seem.—SWIFT.

FEW are qualified to shine in company, but it is in most men's power to be agreeable.—EMERSON.

A CAUSE is like champagne and high heels—one must be prepared to suffer for it.—ARNOLD BENNETT.

A MAN whose youth has no follies, will in maturity have no power.
—MORTIMER COLLINS.

THE more men know, the more they deceive themselves.—ROUSSEAU.

To say what one thinks; that is, to tell the truth, is so exceedingly rare that one may almost call it a grace in man.—HILAIRE BELLOC.

HALF the failures in life arise from pulling in one's horse as he is leaping.
—J. C. HARE.

EVERY man should let alone another man's prejudices and examine his own.
—LOCKE.

The Croxley Master

A romantic fight to the finish

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

MR. ROBERT MONTGOMERY was seated at his desk, his head upon his hands, in a state of the blackest despondency. Before him was the open ledger with the long columns of Dr. Oldacre's prescriptions. At his elbow lay the wooden tray with the labels in various partitions, the cork box, the lumps of twisted sealing-wax, while in front a rank of empty bottles waited to be filled. But his spirits were too low for work. He sat in silence, with his fine shoulders bowed and his head upon his hands.

Outside, through the grimy surgery window over a foreground of blackened brick and slate, a line of enormous chimneys like Cyclopean pillars upheld the lowering, dun-coloured cloud-bank. For six days in the week they spouted smoke, but to-day the furnace fires were banked, for it was Sunday. Sordid and polluting gloom hung over a district blighted and blasted by the greed of man. There was nothing in the surroundings to cheer a desponding soul, but it was more than his dismal environment which weighed upon the medical assistant.

His trouble was deeper and more personal. The winter session was approaching. He should be back again at the University completing the last year which would give him his medical degree; but, alas! he had not the money with which to pay his class fees, nor could he imagine how he could procure it. Sixty pounds were wanted to make his career, and it might have been as many thousands for any chance there seemed to be of his obtaining it.

He was roused from his black meditation by the entrance of Dr. Oldacre himself, a large, clean-shaven, respectable man, with a prim manner and an austere face. He had prospered exceedingly by the support of the local Church interest, and the rule of his life was never by word or action to run a risk of offending the sentiment which had made him. His standard of respectability and of dignity was exceedingly high, and he expected the same from his assistants. His appearance and words were always vaguely benevolent. A sudden impulse came over the despondent student. He would test the reality of this philanthropy.

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Oldacre," said he, rising from his chair; "I have a great favour to ask of you."

The doctor's appearance was not encouraging. His mouth suddenly tightened, and his eyes fell.

"Yes, Mr. Montgomery?"

"You are aware, sir, that I need only one more session to complete my course."

"So you have told me."

"It is very important to me, sir."

"Naturally."

"The fees, Dr. Oldacre, would amount to about sixty pounds."

"I am afraid that my duties call me elsewhere, Mr. Montgomery."

"One moment, sir! I had hoped, sir, that perhaps, if I signed a paper promising you interest upon your money, you would advance this sum to me. I will pay you back, sir, I really will. Or, if you like, I will work it off after I am qualified."

The doctor's lips had thinned into a narrow line. His eyes were raised again, and sparkled indignantly.

"Your request is unreasonable, Mr. Montgomery. I am surprised that you should have made it. Consider, sir, how many thousands of medical students there are in this country. No doubt there are many of them who have a difficulty in finding their fees. Am I to provide for them all? Or why should I make an exception in your favour? I am grieved and disappointed, Mr. Montgomery, that you should have put me into the painful position of having to refuse you." He turned upon his heel, and walked with offended dignity out of the surgery.

The student smiled bitterly, and turned to his work of making up the morning's

prescriptions. It was poor and unworthy work—work which any weakling might have done as well, and this was a man of exceptional nerve and sinew. But, such as it was, it brought him his board and £1 a week, enough to help him during the summer months and let him save a few pounds towards his winter keep. But those class fees! Where were they to come from? He could not save them out of his scanty wage. Dr. Oldacre would not advance them. He saw no way of earning them. His brains were fairly good, but brains of that quality were a drug in the market. He only excelled in his strength; and where was he to find a customer for that? But the ways of Fate are strange, and his customer was at hand.

"Look y'ere!" said a voice at the door.

Montgomery looked up, for the voice was a loud and rasping one. A young man stood at the entrance—a stocky, bull-necked young miner, in tweed Sunday clothes and an aggressive necktie. He was a sinister-looking figure, with dark, insolent eyes, and the jaw and throat of a bulldog.

"Look y'ere!" said he again. "Why hast thou not sent t' medicine oop as thy master ordered?"

Montgomery had become accustomed to the brutal frankness of the Northern worker. At first it had enraged him, but after a time he had grown callous to it, and accepted it as it was meant. But this was something different. It was insolence—brutal, overbearing insolence—with physical menace behind it.

"What name?" he asked coldly.

"Barton. Happen I may give thee cause to mind that name, young man. Mak' oop t' wife's medicine this very moment, look ye, or it will be the worse for thee."

Montgomery smiled. A pleasant sense of relief thrilled softly through him. What blessed safety-valve was this through which his jangled nerves might find some outlet. The provocation was so gross, the insult so unprovoked, that he could have none of those qualms which take the edge off a man's mettle. He finished sealing the bottle upon which he was occupied, and he addressed it and placed it carefully in the rack.

"Look here!" said he, turning round to the miner, "your medicine will be made up in its turn and sent down to you. I don't allow folk in the surgery. Wait outside in the waiting-room, if you wish to wait at all."

"Young man," said the miner, "thou's got to mak' t' wife's medicine here, and now, and quick, while I wait and watch thee, or else happen thou might need some medicine thysel' before all is over."

"I shouldn't advise you to fasten a quarrel upon me." Montgomery was speaking in the hard, staccato voice of a man who is holding himself in with difficulty. "You'll save trouble if you'll go quietly. If you don't you'll be hurt. Ah, you would? Take it, then!"

The blows were almost simultaneous—a savage swing which whistled past Montgomery's ear and a straight drive which took the workman on the chin. Luck was with the assistant. That single whizzing uppercut, and the way in which it was delivered, warned him that he had a formidable man to deal with. But if he had underrated his antagonist, his antagonist had also underrated him, and had laid himself open to a fatal blow.

The miner's head had come with a crash against the corner of the surgery shelves, and he had dropped heavily on to the ground. There he lay with his bandy legs drawn up and his hands thrown abroad, the blood trickling over the surgery tiles.

"Had enough?" asked the assistant, breathing fiercely through his nose.

But no answer came. The man was insensible. And then the danger of his position came upon Montgomery, and he turned as white as his antagonist. A Sunday, the immaculate Dr. Oldacre with his pious connexion, a savage brawl with a patient; he would irretrievably lose his situation if the facts came out. It was not much of a situation, but he could not get another without a reference, and Oldacre might refuse him one. Without money for his classes, and without a situation—what was to become of him? It was ruin.

But perhaps he could escape exposure after all. He seized his insensible adversary, dragged him out into the centre of the room, loosened his collar, and squeezed the surgery sponge over his face. He sat up at last with a gasp and a scowl.

"Domn thee, thou's spoilt my necktie," said he, mopping up the water from his breast.

"I'm sorry I hit you so hard," said Montgomery, apologetically.

"Thou hit me hard! I could stan' such

fly-flappin' all day. 'Twas this here press that cracked my pate for me, and thou art a looky man to be able to boast as thou hast outed me. And now I'd be obliged to thee if thou wilt give me t' wife's medicine."

Montgomery gladly made it up and handed it to the miner.

"You are weak still," said he. "Won't you stay awhile and rest?"

"T' wife wants her medicine," said the man, and lurched out at the door.

The assistant looking after him, saw him rolling with an uncertain step down the street, until a friend met him, and they walked on arm-in-arm. The man seemed in his rough Northern fashion to bear no grudge, and so Montgomery's fears left him. There was no reason why the doctor should know anything about it. He wiped the blood from the floor, put the surgery in order, and went on with his interrupted task, hoping that he had come scatheless out of a very dangerous business.

Yet all day he was aware of a sense of vague uneasiness, which sharpened into dismay when, late in the afternoon, he was informed that three gentlemen had called and were waiting for him in the surgery. A coroner's inquest, a descent of detectives, an invasion of angry relatives—all sorts of possibilities rose to scare him. With tense nerves and a rigid face he went to meet his visitors.

They were a very singular trio. Each was known to him by sight; but what on earth the three could be doing together, and, above all, what they could expect from *him*, was a most inexplicable problem.

The first was Sorley Wilson, the son of the owner of the Nonpareil Coalpit. He was a young blood of twenty, heir to a fortune, a keen sportsman, and down for the Easter Vacation from Magdalene College. He sat now upon the edge of the surgery table, looking in thoughtful silence at Montgomery, and twisting the ends of his small, black, waxed moustache.

The second was Purvis, the publican, owner of the chief beershop, and well known as the local bookmaker. He was a coarse, clean-shaven man, whose fiery face made a singular contrast with his ivory-white bald head. He had shrewd, light-blue eyes with foxy lashes, and he also leaned forward in silence from his chair, a fat, red hand upon either knee, and stared critically at the young assistant.

So did the third visitor, Fawcett, the horsebreaker, who leaned back, his long, thin legs, with their box-cloth riding-gaiters, thrust out in front of him, tapping his protruding teeth with his riding-whip, with anxious thought in every line of his rugged, bony face. Publican, exquisite, and horsebreaker were all three equally silent, equally earnest, and equally critical. Montgomery, seated in the midst of them, looked from one to the other.

"Well, gentlemen?" he observed, but no answer came.

The position was embarrassing.

"No," said the horsebreaker, at last. "No. It's off. It's nowt."

"Stand oop, lad; let's see thee standin'." It was the publican who spoke.

Montgomery obeyed. He would learn all about it, no doubt, if he were patient. He stood up and turned slowly round, as if in front of his tailor.

"It's off! It's off!" cried the horse-breaker. "Why, mon, the Master would break him over his knee."

"Oh, that be hanged for a yarn!" said the young Cantab. "You can drop out if you like, Fawcett, but I'll see this thing through, if I have to do it alone. I don't hedge a penny. I like the cut of him a great deal better than I liked Ted Barton."

"Look at Barton's shoulders, Mr. Wilson."

"Lumpiness isn't always strength. Give me nerve and fire and breed. That's what wins."

"Ay, sir, you have it theer—you have it theer!" said the fat, red-faced publican, in a thick, suety voice. "It's the same wi' poops. Get 'em clean-bred an' fine, an' they'll yark the thick 'uns—yark 'em out o' their skins."

"He's ten good pund on the light side," growled the horsebreaker.

"He's a welter weight, anyhow."

"A hundred and thirty."

"A hundred and fifty, if he's an ounce."

"Well, the Master doesn't scale much more than that."

"A hundred and seventy-five."

"That was when he was hog-fat and living high. Work the grease out of him, and I lay there's no great difference between them. Have you been weighed lately, Mr. Montgomery?"

It was the first direct question which had been asked him. He had stood in the midst of them, like a horse at a fair, and he

was just beginning to wonder whether he was more angry or amused.

"I am just eleven stone," said he.

"I said that he was a welter weight."

"But suppose you was trained?" said the publican. "Wot then?"

"I am always in training."

"In a manner of speakin', no doubt, he *is* always in trainin'," remarked the horse-breaker. "But trainin' for everyday work ain't the same as trainin' with a trainer; and I dare bet, with all respec' to your opinion, Mr. Wilson, that there's half a stone of tallow on him at this minute."

The young Cantab put his fingers on the assistant's upper arm. Then with his other hand on his wrist he bent the forearm sharply, and felt the biceps, as round and hard as a cricket-ball, spring up under his fingers.

"Feel that!" said he.

The publican and horsebreaker felt it with an air of reverence.

"Good lad! He'll do yet!" cried Purvis.

"Gentlemen," said Montgomery, "I think that you will acknowledge that I have been very patient with you. I have listened to all that you have to say about my personal appearance, and now I must really beg that you will have the goodness to tell me what is the matter."

They all sat down in their serious, business-like way.

"That's easy done, Mr. Montgomery," said the fat-voiced publican. "But before sayin' anything we had to wait and see whether, in a way of speakin', there was any need for us to say anything at all. Mr. Wilson thinks there is. Mr. Fawcett, who has the same right to his opinion, bein' also a backer and one o' the committee, thinks the other way."

"I thought him too light built, and I think so now," said the horsebreaker, still tapping his prominent teeth with the metal head of his riding-whip. "But happen he may pull through; and he's a fine-made, buirdly young chap, so if you mean to back him, Mr. Wilson——"

"Which I do."

"And you, Purvis?"

"I ain't one to go back, Fawcett."

"Well, I'll stan' to my share of the purse."

"And well I knew you would," said Purvis, "for it would be somethin' new to find Isaac Fawcett as a spoil-sport. Well, then, we make up the hundred for the stake among us, and the fight stands—always supposin' the young man is willin'."

"Excuse all this rot, Mr. Montgomery," said the University man, in a genial voice. "We've begun at the wrong end, I know, but we'll soon straighten it out, and I hope that you will see your way to falling in with our views. In the first place, you remember the man whom you knocked out this morning? He is Barton—the famous Ted Barton."

"I'm sure, sir, you may well be proud to have outed him in one round," said the publican. "Why, it took Morris, the ten-stone-six champion, a deal more trouble than that before he put Barton to sleep. You've done a fine performance, sir, and happen you'll do a finer, if you give yourself the chance."

"I never heard of Ted Barton, beyond seeing the name on a medicine label," said the assistant.

"Well, you may take it from me that he's a slaughterer," said the horsebreaker. "You've taught him a lesson that he needed, for it was always a word and a blow with him, and the word alone was worth five shillin' in a public court. He won't be so ready now to shake his nief in the face of every one he meets. However, that's neither here nor there."

Montgomery looked at them in bewilderment.

"For goodness' sake, gentlemen, tell me what it is you want me to do!" he cried.

"We want you to fight Silas Craggs, better known as the Master of Croxley."

"But why?"

"Because Ted Barton was to have fought him next Saturday. He was the champion of the Wilson coal-pits, and the other was the Master of the iron-folk down at the Croxley smelters. We'd matched our man for a purse of a hundred against the Master. But you've queered our man, and he can't face such a battle with a two-inch cut at the back of his head. There's only one thing to be done, sir, and that is for you to take his place. If you can lick Ted Barton you may lick the Master of Croxley; but if you don't we're done, for there's no one else who is in the same street with him in this district. It's twenty rounds, two-ounce gloves, Queensberry rules, and a decision on points if you fight to the finish."

For a moment the absurdity of the thing drove every other thought out of Mont-

gomery's head. But then there came a sudden revulsion. A hundred pounds!—all he wanted to complete his education was lying there ready to his hand if only that hand were strong enough to pick it up. He had thought bitterly that morning that there was no market for his strength, but here was one where his muscle might earn more in an hour than his brains in a year. But a chill of doubt came over him.

"How can I fight for the coal-pits?" said he. "I am not connected with them."

"Eh, lad, but thou art!" cried Old Purvis. "We've got it down in writin', and it's clear enough. 'Any one connected with the coal-pits.' Doctor Oldacre is the coal-pit club doctor; thou art his assistant. What more can they want?"

"Yes, that's right enough," said the Cantab. "It would be a very sporting thing of you, Mr. Montgomery, if you would come to our help when we are in such a hole. Of course, you might not like to take the hundred pounds; but I have no doubt that, in the case of your winning, we could arrange that it should take the form of a watch or piece of plate, or any other shape which might suggest itself to you. You see, you are responsible for our having lost our champion, so we really feel that we have a claim upon you."

"Give me a moment, gentlemen. It is very unexpected. I am afraid the doctor would never consent to my going—in fact, I am sure that he would not."

"But he need never know—not before the fight, at any rate. We are not bound to give the name of our man. So long as he is within the weight limits on the day of the fight, that is all that concerns anyone."

The adventure and the profit would either of them have attracted Montgomery. The two combined were irresistible.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I'll do it!"

The three sprang from their seats. The publican had seized his right hand, the horse-dealer his left, and the Cantab slapped him on the back.

"Good lad! good lad!" croaked the publican. "Eh, mon, but if thou yark him, thou'll rise in one day from being just a common doctor to the best-known mon 'twixt here and Bradford. Thou art a witherin' tyke, thou art, and no mistake; and if thou beat the Master of Croxley, thou'll find all the beer thou want for the rest of thy life waiting for thee at the Four Sacks."

"It is the most sporting thing I ever heard of in my life," said young Wilson. "By George, sir, if you pull it off, you've got the constituency in your pocket, if you care to stand. You know the outhouse in my garden?"

"Next the road?"

"Exactly. I turned it into a gymnasium for Ted Barton. You'll find all you want there: clubs, punching-ball, bars, dumb-bells, everything. Then you'll want a sparring partner. Ogilvy has been acting for Barton, but we don't think that he is class enough. Barton bears you no grudge. He's a good-hearted fellow, though cross-grained with strangers. He looked upon you as a stranger this morning, but he says he knows you now. He is quite ready to spar with you for practice, and he will come at any hour you will name."

"Thank you; I will let you know the hour," said Montgomery, and so the committee, jubilant, departed upon their way.

The medical assistant sat for a little time in the surgery turning it over in his mind. He had been trained originally at the University by the man who had been middle-weight champion in his day. It was true that his teacher was long past his prime, slow upon his feet and stiff in his joints, but even so he was still a tough antagonist; but Montgomery had found at last that he could more than hold his own with him. He had won the University medal, and his teacher, who had trained so many students, was emphatic in his opinion that he had never had one who was in the same class with him. He had been exhorted to go in for the Amateur Championships, but he had no particular ambition in that direction. Once he had put on the gloves with Hammer Tunstall in a booth at a fair, and had fought three rattling rounds in which he had the worst of it, but had made the prize-fighter stretch himself to the uttermost. There was his whole record, and was it enough to encourage him to stand up to the Master of Croxley? He had never heard of the Master before, but then he had lost touch of the ring during the last few years of hard work. After all, what did it matter? If he won, there was the money, which meant so much to him. If he lost, it would only mean a thrashing. He could take punishment without flinching; of that he was certain. If there were only one chance in a hundred of pulling it off, then it was worth his while to attempt it.

Dr. Oldacre, new come from church, with an ostentatious Prayer-book in his kid-gloved hand, broke in upon his meditation.

"You don't go to service, I observe, Mr. Montgomery," said he, coldly.

"No, sir; I have had some business to detain me."

"It is very near to my heart that my household should set a good example. There are so few educated people in this district that a great responsibility devolves upon us. If we do not live up to the highest, how can we expect these poor workers to do so? It is a dreadful thing to reflect that the parish takes a great deal more interest in an approaching glove-fight than in their religious duties."

"A glove-fight, sir?" said Montgomery, guiltily.

"I believe that to be the correct term. One of my patients tells me that it is the talk of the district. A local ruffian, a patient of ours, by the way, is matched against a pugilist over at Croxley. I cannot understand why the law does not step in and stop so degrading an exhibition. It is really a prize-fight."

"A glove-fight, you said."

"I am informed that a two-ounce glove is an evasion by which they dodge the law, and make it difficult for the police to interfere. They contend for a sum of money. It seems dreadful and almost incredible—does it not?—to think that such scenes can be enacted within a few miles of our peaceful home. But you will realize, Mr. Montgomery, that while there are such influences for us to counteract, it is very necessary that we should live up to our highest."

The doctor's sermon would have had more effect if the assistant had not once or twice had occasion to test his highest and come upon it at unexpectedly humble elevations. It is always so particularly easy to "compound for sins we're most inclined to by damning those we have no mind to." In any case, Montgomery felt that of all the men concerned in such a fight—promoters, backers, spectators—it is the actual fighter who holds the strongest and most honourable position. His conscience gave him no concern upon the subject. Endurance and courage are virtues, not vices, and brutality is, at least, better than effeminacy.

There was a little tobacco-shop at the corner of the street, where Montgomery got his bird's-eye and also his local information, for the shopman was a garrulous soul, who knew everything about the affairs of the district. The assistant strolled down there after tea and asked, in a casual way, whether the tobacconist had ever heard of the Master of Croxley.

"Heard of him! Heard of him!" the little man could hardly articulate in his astonishment. "Why, sir, he's the first mon o' the district, an' his name's as well known in the West Riding as the winner o' t' Derby. But Lor', sir"—here he stopped and rummaged among a heap of papers. "They are makin' a fuss about him on account o' his fight wi' Ted Barton, and so the *Croxley Herald* has his life an' record, an' here it is, an' thou canst read it for thysel'."

The sheet of the paper which he held up was a lake of print around an islet of illustration. The latter was a coarse wood-cut of a pugilist's head and neck set in a cross-barred jersey. It was a sinister but powerful face, the face of a debauched hero, clean-shaven, strongly eyebrowed, keen-eyed, with a huge, aggressive jaw, and an animal dewlap beneath it. The long, obstinate cheeks ran flush up to the narrow, sinister eyes. The mighty neck came down square from the ears and curved outwards into shoulders, which had lost nothing at the hands of the local artist. Above was written "Silas Craggs," and beneath, "The Master of Croxley."

"Thou'll find all about him there, sir," said the tobacconist. "He's a witherin' tyke, he is, and we're proud to have him in the county. If he hadn't broke his leg he'd have been champion of England."

"Broke his leg, has he?"

"Yes, and it set badly. They ca' him owd K behind his bock, for thot is how his two legs look. But his arms—well, if they was both stropped to a bench, as the sayin' is, I wonder where the champion of England would be then."

"I'll take this with me," said Montgomery; and putting the paper into his pocket he returned home.

It was not a cheering record which he read there. The whole history of the Croxley Master was given in full, his many victories, his few defeats.

"Born in 1857," said the provincial biographer, "Silas Craggs, better known in sporting circles as The Master of Croxley, is now in his fortieth year."

"Hang it, I'm only twenty-three," said Montgomery to himself, and read on more cheerfully.

"Having in his youth shown a surprising aptitude for the game, he fought his way up among his comrades, until he became the recognized champion of the district and won the proud title which he still holds. Ambitious of a more than local fame, he secured a patron, and fought his first fight against Jack Barton, of Birmingham, in May, 1880, at the old Loiterers' Club. Craggs, who fought at ten-stone-two at the time, had the better of fifteen rattling rounds, and gained an award on points against the Midlander. Having disposed of James Dunn, of Rotherhithe, Cameron, of Glasgow, and a youth named Fernie, he was thought so highly of by the fancy that he was matched against Ernest Willox, at that time middle-weight champion of the North of England, and defeated him in a hard-fought battle, knocking him out in the tenth round after a punishing contest. At this period it looked as if the very highest honours of the ring were within the reach of the young Yorkshireman, but he was laid upon the shelf by a most unfortunate accident. The kick of a horse broke his thigh, and for a year he was compelled to rest himself. When he returned to his work the fracture had set badly, and his activity was much impaired. It was owing to this that he was defeated in seven rounds by Willox, the man whom he had previously beaten, and afterwards by James Shaw, of London, though the latter acknowledged that he had found the toughest customer of his career. Undismayed by his reverses, the Master adapted the style of his fighting to his physical disabilities and resumed his career of victory—defeating Norton (the black), Bobby Wilson, and Levi Cohen, the latter a heavy-weight. Conceding two stone, he fought a draw with the famous Billy McQuire, and afterwards, for a purse of fifty pounds, he defeated Sam Hare at the Pelican Club, London. In 1891 a decision was given against him upon a foul when fighting a winning fight against Jim Taylor, the Australian middle-weight, and so mortified was he by the decision that he withdrew from the ring. Since then he has hardly fought at all save to accommodate any local aspirant who may wish to learn the difference between a bar-room scramble and a scientific contest. The latest of these ambitious souls comes from the Wilson coal-pits, which have undertaken to put up a stake of £100 and back their local champion. There are various rumours afloat as to who their representative is to be, the name of Ted Barton being freely mentioned; but the betting, which is seven to one on the Master against any untried man, is a fair reflection of the feeling of the community."

¶

MONTGOMERY read it over twice, and it left him with a very serious face. No light matter this which he had undertaken; no battle with a rough-and-tumble fighter who presumed upon a local reputation. The man's record showed that he was first-class—or nearly so. There were a few points in his favour, and he must make the most of them. There was age—twenty-three against forty. There was an old ring proverb that "Youth must be served," but the annals of the ring offer a great number of exceptions. A hard veteran, full of cool valour and ring-craft, could give ten or fifteen years and a beating to most striplings. He could not rely too much upon his advantage in age. But then there was the lameness; that must surely count for a great deal. And, lastly, there was the chance that the Master might underrate his opponent, that he might be remiss in his training, and refuse to abandon his usual way of life, if he thought that he had an easy task before him. In a man of his age and habits this seemed very possible. Montgomery prayed that it might be so. Meanwhile, if his opponent were the best man who ever jumped the ropes into a ring, his own duty was clear. He must prepare himself carefully, throw away no chance, and do the very best that he could. But he knew enough to appreciate the difference which exists in boxing, as in every sport, between the amateur and the professional. The coolness, the power of hitting, above all the capability of taking punishment, count for so much. Those specially developed, gutta-percha-like abdominal muscles of the hardened pugilist will take without flinching a blow which would leave another man writhing on the ground. Such things are not to be acquired in a week, but all that could be done in a week should be done.

The medical assistant had a good basis to start from. He was 5 feet 11 inches—tall

enough for anything on two legs, as the old ring men used to say—lithe and spare, with the activity of a panther, and a strength which had hardly yet ever found its limitations. His muscular development was finely hard, but his power came rather from that higher nerve-energy which counts for nothing upon a measuring tape. He had the well-curved nose and the widely-opened eye which never yet were seen upon the face of a craven, and behind everything he had the driving force which came from the knowledge that his whole career was at stake upon the contest. The three backers rubbed their hands when they saw him at work punching the ball in the gymnasium next morning; and Fawcett, the horse-breaker, who had written to Leeds to hedge his bets, sent a wire to cancel the letter and to lay another fifty at the market price of seven to one.

Montgomery's chief difficulty was to find time for his training without any interference from the doctor. His work took him a large part of the day, but as the visiting was done on foot, and considerable distances had to be traversed, it was a training in itself. For the rest, he punched the swinging ball and worked with the dumb-bells for an hour every morning and evening, and boxed twice a day with Ted Barton in the gymnasium, gaining as much profit as could be got from a rushing, two-handed slogger. Barton was full of admiration for his cleverness and quickness, but doubtful about his strength. Hard hitting was the feature of his own style, and he exacted it from others.

"Lord, sir, that's a turble poor poonch for an eleven-stone man!" he would cry. "Thou wilt have to hit harder than that afore t' Master will know that thou art theer. Ah, thot's better, mon, thot's fine!" he would add, as his opponent lifted him across the room on the end of a right counter. "Thot's how I likes to feel 'em. Happen thou'lt pull through yet." He chuckled with joy when Montgomery knocked him into a corner. "Eh, mon, thou art comin' along grand. Thou hast fair yarked me off my legs. Do it again, lad, do it again!"

The only part of Montgomery's training which came within the doctor's observation was his diet, and that puzzled him considerably.

"You will excuse my remarking, Mr. Montgomery, that you are becoming rather particular in your tastes. Such fads are not to be encouraged in one's youth. Why do you eat toast with every meal?"

"I find it suits me better than bread, sir."

"It entails unnecessary work upon the cook. I observe, also, that you have turned against potatoes."

"Yes, sir; I think that I am better without them."

"And you no longer drink your beer?"

"No, sir."

"These causeless whims and fancies are very much to be deprecated, Mr. Montgomery. Consider how many there are to whom these very potatoes and this very beer would be most acceptable."

"No doubt, sir. But at present I prefer to do without them."

They were sitting alone at lunch, and the assistant thought that it would be a good opportunity of asking leave for the day of the fight.

"I should be glad if you could let me have leave for Saturday, Doctor Oldacre."

"It is very inconvenient upon so busy a day."

"I should do a double day's work on Friday so as to leave everything in order. I should hope to be back in the evening."

"I am afraid I cannot spare you, Mr. Montgomery."

This was a facer. If he could not get leave he would go without it.

"You will remember, Doctor Oldacre, that when I came to you it was understood that I should have a clear day every month. I have never claimed one. But now there are reasons why I wish to have a holiday upon Saturday."

Doctor Oldacre gave in with a very bad grace.

"Of course, if you insist upon your formal rights, there is no more to be said, Mr. Montgomery, though I feel that it shows a certain indifference to my comfort and the welfare of the practice. Do you still insist?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Have your way."

The doctor was boiling over with anger, but Montgomery was a valuable assistant—steady, capable, and hard-working—and he could not afford to lose him. Even if he had been prompted to advance those class fees, for which his assistant had appealed, it would have been against his interests to do so, for he did not wish him to qualify,

and he desired him to remain in his subordinate position, in which he worked so hard for so small a wage. There was something in the cool insistence of the young man, a quiet resolution in his voice as he claimed his Saturday, which aroused his curiosity.

"I have no desire to interfere unduly with your affairs, Mr. Montgomery, but were you thinking of having a day in Leeds upon Saturday?"

"No, sir."

"In the country?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are very wise. You will find a quiet day among the wild flowers a very valuable restorative. Had you thought of any particular direction?"

"I am going over Croxley way."

"Well, there is no prettier country when once you are past the iron-works. What could be more delightful than to lie upon the Fells, basking in the sunshine, with perhaps some instructive and elevating book as your companion? I should recommend a visit to the ruins of St. Bridget's Church, a very interesting relic of the early Norman era. By the way, there is one objection which I see to your going to Croxley on Saturday. It is upon that date, as I am informed, that that ruffianly glove-fight takes place. You may find yourself molested by the blackguards whom it will attract."

"I will take my chance of that, sir," said the assistant.

On the Friday night, which was the last before the fight, Montgomery's three backers assembled in the gymnasium and inspected their man as he went through some light exercises to keep his muscles supple. He was certainly in splendid condition, his skin shining with health, and his eyes with energy and confidence. The three walked round him and exulted.

"He's simply ripping!" said the undergraduate. "By gad, you've come out of it splendidly. You're as hard as a pebble, and fit to fight for your life."

"Happen he's a trifle on the fine side," said the publican. "Runs a bit light at the loins, to my way of thinkin'."

"What weight to-day?"

"Ten stone eleven," the assistant answered.

"That's only three pund off in a week's trainin'," said the horsebreaker. "He said right when he said that he was in condition. Well, it's fine stuff all there is of it, but I'm none so sure as there is enough." He kept poking his finger into Montgomery, as if he were one of his horses. "I hear that the Master will scale a hundred and sixty odd at the ring-side."

"But there's some of that which he'd like well to pull off and leave behind wi' his shirt," said Purvis. "I hear they've had a rare job to get him to drop his beer, and if it had not been for that great red-headed wench of his they'd never ha' done it. She fair scratted the face off a potman that had brought him a gallon from t' Chequers. They say the hussy is his sparrin' partner, as well as his sweetheart, and that his poor wife is just breakin' her heart over it. Hullo, young 'un, what do you want?"

The door of the gymnasium had opened, and a lad about sixteen, grimy and black with soot and iron, stepped into the yellow glare of the oil-lamp. Ted Barton seized him by the collar.

"See here, thou yoong whelp, this is private, and we want noan o' thy spyin'!"

"But I maun speak to Mr. Wilson."

The young Cantab stepped forward.

"Well, my lad, what is it?"

"It's aboot t' fight, Mr. Wilson, sir. I wanted to tell your mon somethin' aboot t' Maister."

"We've no time to listen to gossip, my boy. We know all about the Master."

"But thou doant, sir. Nobody knows but me and mother, and we thought as we'd like thy mon to know, sir, for we want him to fair bray him."

"Oh, you want the Master fair brayed, do you? So do we. Well, what have you to say?"

"Is this your mon, sir?"

"Well, suppose it is?"

"Then it's him I want to tell aboot it. T' Maister is blind o' the left eye."

"Nonsense!"

"It's true, sir. Not stone blind, but rarely fogged. He keeps it secret, but mother knows, and so do I. If thou slip him on the left side he can't cop thee. Thou'll find it right as I tell thee. And mark him when he sinks his right. 'Tis his best blow, his right upper-cut. T' Maister's finisher, they ca' it at t' works. It's a turble blow, when it do come home."

"Thank you, my boy. This is information worth having about his sight," said

Wilson. "How came you to know so much? Who are you?"

"I'm his son, sir."

Wilson whistled.

"And who sent you to us?"

"My mother. I maun get back to her again."

"Take this half-crown."

"No, sir, I don't seek money in comin' here. I do it——"

"For love?" suggested the publican.

"For hate!" said the boy, and darted off into the darkness.

"Seems to me t' red-headed wench may do him more harm than good, after all," remarked the publican. "And now, Mr. Montgomery, sir, you've done enough for this evenin', and a nine-hours' sleep is the best trainin' before a battle. Happen this time to-morrow night you'll be safe back again with your £100 in your pocket."

II

WORK was struck at one o'clock at the coal-pits and the iron-works, and the fight was arranged for three. From the Croxley furnaces, from Wilson's Coal-pits, from the Heartsease Mine, from the Dodd Mills, from the Leverworth Smelters the workmen came trooping, each with his fox-terrier or his lurcher at his heels. Warped with labour and twisted by toil, bent double by week-long work in the cramped coal galleries, or half-blinded with years spent in front of white-hot fluid metal, these men still gilded their harsh and hopeless lives by their devotion to sport. It was their one relief, the only thing which could distract their minds from sordid surroundings and give them an interest beyond the blackened circle which enclosed them. Literature, art, science, all these things were beyond their horizon; but the race, the football match, the cricket, the fight, these were things which they could understand, which they could speculate upon in advance and comment upon afterwards. Sometimes brutal, sometimes grotesque, the love of sport is still one of the great agencies which make for the happiness of our people. It lies very deeply in the springs of our nature, and when it has been educated out, a higher, more refined nature may be left, but it will not be of that robust British type which has left its mark so deeply on the world. Every one of these ruddled workers, slouching with his dog at his heels to see something of the fight, was a true unit of his race.

It was a squally May day, with bright sunbursts and driving showers. Montgomery worked all morning in the surgery, getting his medicine made up.

"The weather seems so very unsettled, Mr. Montgomery," remarked the doctor, "that I am inclined to think that you had better postpone your little country excursion until a later date."

"I am afraid that I must go to-day, sir."

"I have just had an intimation that Mrs. Potter, at the other side of Angleton, wishes to see me. It is probable that I shall be there all day. It will be extremely inconvenient to leave the house empty so long."

"I am very sorry, sir, but I must go," said the assistant, doggedly.

The doctor saw that it would be useless to argue, and departed in the worst of bad tempers upon his mission. Montgomery felt easier now that he was gone. He went up to his room, and packed his running-shoes, his fighting-drawers, and his cricket-sash into a handbag. When he came down Mr. Wilson was waiting for him in the surgery.

"I hear the doctor has gone."

"Yes; he is likely to be away all day."

"I don't see that it matters much. It's bound to come to his ears by to-night.".

"Yes; it's serious with me, Mr. Wilson. If I win, it's all right. I don't mind telling you that the hundred pounds will make all the difference to me. But if I lose, I shall lose my situation, for, as you say, I can't keep it secret."

"Never mind. We'll see you through among us. I only wonder the doctor has not heard, for it's all over the country that you are to fight the Croxley Champion. We've had Armitage up about it already. He's the Master's backer, you know. He wasn't sure that you were eligible. The Master said he wanted you whether you were eligible or not. Armitage has money on, and would have made trouble if he could. But I showed him that you came within the conditions of the challenge, and he agreed that it was all right. They think they have a soft thing on."

"Well, I can only do my best," said Montgomery.

They lunched together; a silent and rather nervous repast, for Montgomery's mind was full of what was before him, and

Wilson had himself more money at stake than he cared to lose.

Wilson's carriage and pair were at the door, the horses with blue-and-white rosettes at their ears, which were the colours of the Wilson Coal-pits, well known on many a football field. At the avenue gate a crowd of some hundred pitmen and their wives gave a cheer as the carriage passed. To the assistant it all seemed dreamlike and extraordinary—the strangest experience of his life, but with a thrill of human action and interest in it which made it passionately absorbing. He lay back in the open carriage and saw the fluttering handkerchiefs from the doors and windows of the miners' cottages. Wilson had pinned a blue-and-white rosette upon his coat, and every one knew him as their champion. "Good luck, sir! good luck to thee!" they shouted from the roadside. He felt that it was like some unromantic knight riding down to sordid lists, but there was something of chivalry in it all the same. He fought for others as well as for himself. He might fail from want of skill or strength, but deep in his sombre soul he vowed that it should never be for want of heart.

Mr. Fawcett was just mounting into his high-wheeled, spidery dogcart, with his little bit of blood between the shafts. He waved his whip and fell in behind the carriage. They overtook Purvis, the tomato-faced publican, upon the road, with his wife in her Sunday bonnet. They also dropped into the procession, and then, as they traversed the seven miles of the high road to Croxley, their two-horsed, rosetted carriage became gradually the nucleus of a comet with a loosely radiating tail. From every side road came the miners' carts, the humble, ramshackle traps black and bulging, with their loads of noisy, foul-tongued, open-hearted partisans. They trailed for a long quarter of a mile behind them—cracking, whipping, shouting, galloping, swearing. Horsemen and runners were mixed with the vehicles. And then suddenly a squad of the Sheffield Yeomanry, who were having their annual training in those parts, clattered and jingled out of a field, and rode as an escort to the carriage. Through the dust-clouds round him Montgomery saw the gleaming brass helmets, the bright coats, and the tossing heads of the chargers, the delighted brown faces of the troopers. It was more dream-like than ever.

And then, as they approached the monstrous uncouth line of bottle-shaped buildings which marked the smelting-works of Croxley, their long, writhing snake of dust was headed off by another but longer one which wound across their path. The main road into which their own opened was filled by the rushing current of traps. The Wilson contingent halted until the others should get past. The iron-men cheered and groaned, according to their humour, as they whirled past their antagonist. Rough chaff flew back and forwards like iron nuts and splinters of coal. "Brought him up, then!" "Got t' hearse for to fetch him back?" "Where's t' owd K-legs?" "Mon, mon, have thy photograph took—'twill mind thee of what thou used to look!" "He fight?—he's nowt but a half-baked doctor!" "Happen he'll doctor thy Croxley Champion afore he's through wi't."

So they flashed at each other as the one side waited and the other passed. Then there came a rolling murmur swelling into a shout, and a great brake with four horses came clattering along, all streaming with salmon-pink ribbons. The driver wore a white hat with pink rosette, and beside him, on the high seat, were a man and a woman—she with her arm round his waist. Montgomery had one glimpse of them as they flashed past: he with a furry cap drawn low over his brow, a great frieze coat, and a pink comforter round his throat; she brazen, red-headed, bright-coloured, laughing excitedly. The Master, for it was he, turned as he passed, gazed hard at Montgomery, and gave him a menacing, gap-toothed grin. It was a hard, wicked face, blue-jowled and craggy, with long, obstinate cheeks and inexorable eyes. The brake behind was full of patrons of the sport—flushed iron-foremen, heads of departments, managers. One was drinking from a metal flask, and raised it to Montgomery as he passed; and then the crowd thinned, and the Wilson *cortège* with their dragoons swept in at the rear of the others.

¶

THE road led away from Croxley, between curving green hills, gashed and polluted by the searchers for coal and iron. The whole country had been gutted, and vast piles of refuse and mountains of slag suggested the mighty chambers which the labour of man had burrowed beneath. On the left the road curved up to where a huge building,

roofless and dismantled, stood crumbling and forlorn, with the light shining through the windowless squares.

"That's the old Arrowsmith's factory. That's where the fight is to be," said Wilson. "How are you feeling now?"

"Thank you. I was never better in my life," Montgomery answered.

"By Gad, I like your nerve!" said Wilson, who was himself flushed and uneasy. "You'll give us a fight for our money, come what may. That place on the right is the office, and that has been set aside as the dressing and weighing-room."

The carriage drove up to it amidst the shouts of the folk upon the hillside. Lines of empty carriages and traps curved down upon the winding road, and a black crowd surged round the door of the ruined factory. The seats, as a huge placard announced, were five shillings, three shillings, and a shilling, with half-price for dogs. The takings, deducting expenses, were to go to the winner, and it was already evident that a larger stake than a hundred pounds was in question. A babel of voices rose from the door. The workers wished to bring their dogs in free. The men scuffled. The dogs barked. The crowd was a whirling, eddying pool, surging with a roar up to the narrow cleft which was its only outlet.

The brake, with its salmon-coloured streamers and four reeking horses, stood empty before the door of the office; Wilson, Purvis, Fawcett, and Montgomery passed in.

There was a large, bare room inside with square, clean patches upon the grimy walls, where pictures and almanacs had once hung. Worn linoleum covered the floor, but there was no furniture save some benches and a deal table with an ewer and a basin upon it. Two of the corners were curtained off. In the middle of the room was a weighing-chair. A hugely fat man, with a salmon tie and a blue waistcoat with birds'-eye spots, came bustling up to them. It was Armitage, the butcher and grazier, well known for miles round as a warm man, and the most liberal patron of sport in the Riding.

"Well, well," he grunted, in a thick, fussy, wheezy voice, "you have come, then. Got your man? Got your man?"

"Here he is, fit and well. Mr. Montgomery, let me present you to Mr. Armitage."

"Glad to meet you, sir. Happy to make your acquaintance. I make bold to say, sir, that we of Croxley admire your courage, Mr. Montgomery, and that our only hope is a fair fight and no favour and the best man win. That's our sentiment at Croxley."

"And it is my sentiment also," said the assistant.

"Well, you can't say fairer than that, Mr. Montgomery. You've taken a large contrac' in hand, but a large contrac' may be carried through, sir, as any one that knows my dealings could testify. The Master is ready to weigh in!"

"So am I."

"You must weigh in the buff."

Montgomery looked askance at the tall, red-headed woman who was standing gazing out of the window.

"That's all right," said Wilson. "Get behind the curtain and put on your fighting-kit."

He did so, and came out the picture of an athlete, in white, loose drawers, canvas shoes, and the sash of a well-known cricket club round his waist. He was trained to a hair, his skin gleaming like silk, and every muscle rippling down his broad shoulders and along his beautiful arms as he moved them. They bunched into ivory knobs, or slid into long sinuous curves, as he raised or lowered his hands.

"What thinkest thou o' that?" asked Ted Barton, his second, of the woman in the window.

She glanced contemptuously at the young athlete.

"It's but a poor kindness thou dost him to put a thread-paper yoong gentleman like yon against a mon as is a mon. Why, my Jock would throttle him wi' one hond lashed behind him."

"Happen he may—happen not," said Barton. "I have but twa pund in the world, but it's on him, every penny, and no hedgin'. But here's t' Maister, and rarely fine he do look."

The prize-fighter had come out from his curtain, a squat, formidable figure, monstrous in chest and arms, limping slightly on his distorted leg. His skin had none of the freshness and clearness of Montgomery's, but was dusky and mottled, with one huge mole amid the mat of tangled black hair which thatched his mighty breast. His weight bore no relation to his strength, for those huge shoulders and great arms, with brown, sledge-hammer fists, would have fitted the heaviest man that ever threw his cap into a ring. But his loins and legs were slight in proportion. Montgomery, on the

other hand, was as symmetrical as a Greek statue. It would be an encounter between a man who was specially fitted for one sport and one who was equally capable of any. The two looked curiously at each other; a bulldog, and a high-bred, clean-limbed terrier, each full of spirit.

"How do you do?"

"How do?" The Master grinned again, and his three jagged front teeth gleamed for an instant. The rest had been beaten out of him in twenty years of battle. He spat upon the floor. "We have a rare fine day for't."

"Capital," said Montgomery.

"That's the good feelin' I like," wheezed the fat butcher. "Good lads, both of them! —prime lads!—hard meat an' good bone. There's no ill-feelin'."

"If he downs me, Gawd bless him!" said the Master.

"An' if we down him, Gawd help him!" interrupted the woman.

"Haud thy tongue, wench!" said the Master impatiently. "Who art thou to put in thy word? Happen I might draw my hand across thy face."

The woman did not take the threat amiss.

"Wilt have enough for thy hand to do, Jock," said she. "Get quit o' this gradely man afore thou turn on me."

The lovers' quarrel was interrupted by the entrance of a newcomer, a gentleman with a fur-collared overcoat and a very shiny top-hat—a top-hat of a degree of glossiness which is seldom seen five miles from Hyde Park. This hat he wore at the extreme back of his head, so that the lower surface of the brim made a kind of frame for his high, bald forehead, his keen eyes, his rugged and yet kindly face. He bustled in with the quiet air of possession with which the ring-master enters the circus.

"It's Mr. Stapleton, the referee from London," said Wilson.

"How do you do, Mr. Stapleton? I was introduced to you at the big fight at the Corinthian Club, in Piccadilly."

"Ah, I dare say," said the other, shaking hands. "Fact is, I'm introduced to so many that I can't undertake to carry their names. Wilson, is it? Well, Mr. Wilson, glad to see you. Couldn't get a fly at the station, and that's why I'm late."

"I'm sure, sir," said Armitage, "we should be proud that anyone so well known in the boxing world should come down to our little exhibition."

"Not at all. Not at all. Anything in the interest of boxin'. All ready? Men weighed?"

"Weighing now, sir."

"Ah, just as well I should see it done. Seen you before, Craggs. Saw you fight your second battle against Willox. You had beaten him once, but he came back on you. What does the indicator say?—one hundred and sixty-three pounds—two off for the kit—one hundred and sixty-one. Now, my lad, you jump. My goodness, what colours are you wearing?"

"The Anonymi Cricket Club."

"What right have you to wear them? I belong to the club myself."

"So do I."

"You an amateur?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you are fighting for a money prize?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you know what you are doing? You realize that you're a professional pug from this onwards, and that if ever you fight again——"

"I'll never fight again."

"Happen you won't," said the woman, and the Master turned a terrible eye upon her.

Two Poets

THE first one youthful was and strong,
With golden hair and dreaming eyes;
He sat beneath the tender skies,
While wound the round before him long,
And wrote of poverty and strife,
The sad futility of life.
And tragedy moved through his song.

The second one was bent and old,
With silvered hair and failing sight;
Yet in his study, dim as night,
Though all his life-tale had been told,
He wrote of love that conquers pain,
Of spring that dies to bloom again,
And hope and faith and joy four-fold.

AMANDA B. HALL

"Well, I suppose you know your own business best. Up you jump. One hundred and fifty-one, minus two, one hundred and forty-nine—twelve pounds difference, but youth and condition on the other scale. Well, the sooner we get to work the better, for I wish to catch the seven o'clock express at Hellifield. Twenty three-minute rounds, with one minute intervals, and Queensberry rules. Those are the conditions, are they not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good, then, we may go across."

The two combatants had overcoats thrown over their shoulders, and the whole party, backers, fighters, seconds, and the referee, filed out of the room. A police inspector was waiting for them in the road. He had a notebook in his hand—that terrible weapon which awes even the London cabman.

"I must take your names, gentlemen, in case it should be necessary to proceed for breach of peace."

"You don't mean to stop the fight?" cried Armitage, in a passion of indignation. "I'm Mr. Armitage, of Croxley, and this is Mr. Wilson, and we'll be responsible that all is fair and as it should be."

"I'll take the names in case it should be necessary to proceed," said the inspector impassively.

"But you know me well."

"If you was a dook or even a judge it would be all the same," said the inspector. "It's the law, and there's an end. I'll not take upon myself to stop the fight, seeing that gloves are to be used, but I'll take the names of all concerned. Silas Craggs, Robert Montgomery, Edward Barton, James Stapleton, of London. Who seconds Silas Craggs?"

"I do," said the woman. "Yes, you can stare, but it's my job, and no one else's. Anastasia's the name—four a's."

"Craggs!"

"Johnson. Anastasia Johnson. If you jug him, you can jug me."

"Who talked of juggin', ye fool?" growled the Master. "Coom on, Mr. Armitage, for I'm fair sick o' this loiterin'."

The inspector fell in with the procession, and proceeded, as they walked up the hill, to bargain in his official capacity for a front seat, where he could safeguard the interests of the law, and in his private capacity to lay out thirty shillings at seven to one with Mr. Armitage. Through the door they passed, down a narrow lane walled with a dense bank of humanity, up a wooden ladder to a platform, over a rope which was slung waist-high from four corner stakes, and then Montgomery realized that he was in that ring in which his immediate destiny was to be worked out. On the stake at one corner there hung a blue-and-white streamer. Barton led him across, the overcoat dangling loosely from his shoulders, and he sat down on a wooden stool. Barton and another man, both wearing white sweaters, stood beside him. The so-called ring was a square, twenty feet each way. At the opposite angle was the sinister figure of the Master, with his red-headed woman and a rough-faced friend to look after him. At each corner were metal basins, pitchers of water, and sponges.

During the hubbub and uproar of the entrance Montgomery was too bewildered to take things in. But now there was a few minutes' delay, for the referee had lingered behind, and so he looked quietly about him. It was a sight to haunt him for a lifetime. Wooden seats had been built in, sloping upwards to the tops of the walls. Above, instead of a ceiling, a great flight of crows passed slowly across a square of grey cloud. Right up to the topmost benches the folk were banked—broadcloth in front, corduroys and fustian behind; faces turned everywhere upon him. The grey reek of the pipes filled the building, and the air was pungent with the acrid smell of cheap, strong tobacco. Everywhere among the human faces were to be seen the heads of the dogs. They growled and yapped from the back benches. In that dense mass of humanity one could hardly pick out individuals, but Montgomery's eyes caught the brazen gleam of the helmets held upon the knees of the ten yeomen of his escort. At the very edge of the platform sat the reporters, five of them: three locals, and two all the way from London. But where was the all-important referee? There was no sign of him, unless he were in the centre of that angry swirl of men near the door.

Mr. Stapleton had stopped to examine the gloves which were to be used, and entered the building after the combatants. He had started to come down that narrow lane with the human walls which led to the ring. But already it had gone abroad that the Wilson champion was a gentleman, and that another gentleman had been appointed as referee. A wave of suspicion

passed through the Croxley folk. They would have one of their own people for a referee. They would not have a stranger. His path was stopped as he made for the ring. Excited men flung themselves in front of him; they waved their fists in his face and cursed him. A woman howled vile names in his ear. Somebody struck at him with an umbrella. "Go thou back to Lunnon. We want noan o' thee. Go thou back!" they yelled.

Stapleton with his shiny hat cocked backwards, and his large, bulging forehead swelling from under it, looked round him from beneath his bushy brows. He was in the centre of a savage and dangerous mob. Then he drew his watch from his pocket and held it dial upwards in his palm.

"In three minutes," said he, "I will declare the fight off."

They raged round him. His cool face and that aggressive top-hat irritated them. Grimy hands were raised. But it was difficult, somehow, to strike a man who was so absolutely indifferent.

"In two minutes I declare the fight off."

They exploded into blasphemy. The breath of angry men smoked into his placid face. A gnarled, grimy fist vibrated at the end of his nose. "We tell thee we want noan o' thee. Get thou back where thou com'st from."

"In one minute I declare the fight off."

Then the calm persistence of the man conquered the swaying, mutable, passionate crowd.

"Let him through, mon. Happen there'll be no fight after a'."

"Let him through."

"Bill, thou loomp, let him pass. Dost want the fight declared off?"

"Make room for the referee!—room for the Lunnon referee!"

And half pushed, half carried, he was swept up to the ring. There were two chairs by the side of it, one for him and one for the time-keeper. He sat down, his hands on his knees, his hat at a more wonderful angle than ever, impassive but solemn, with the aspect of one who appreciates his responsibilities.

Mr. Armitage, the portly butcher, made his way into the ring and held up two fat hands, sparkling with rings, as a signal for silence.

"Gentlemen!" he yelled. And then in a crescendo shriek, "Gentlemen!"

"And ladies!" cried somebody, for indeed there was a fair sprinkling of women among the crowd. "Speak up, owd man!" shouted another. "What price pork chops?" cried somebody at the back. Everybody laughed, and the dogs began to bark. Armitage waved his hands amidst the uproar as if he were conducting an orchestra. At last the babel thinned into silence.

"Gentlemen," he yelled, "the match is between Silas Craggs, whom we call the Master of Croxley, and Robert Montgomery, of the Wilson Coal-pits. The match was to be under eleven eight. When they were weighed just now Craggs weighed eleven seven, and Montgomery ten nine. The conditions of the contest are—the best of twenty three-minute rounds with two-ounce gloves. Should the fight run to its full length it will, of course, be decided upon points. Mr. Stapleton, the well-known London referee, has kindly consented to see fair play. I wish to say that Mr. Wilson and I, the chief backers of the two men, have every confidence in Mr. Stapleton, and that we beg that you accept his rulings without dispute."

He then turned from one combatant to the other, with a wave of his hand.

III

"MONTGOMERY—Craggs!" said he.

A great hush fell over the huge assembly. Even the dogs stopped yapping; one might have thought that the monstrous room was empty. The two men had stood up, the small white gloves over their hands. They advanced from their corners and shook hands: Montgomery gravely, Craggs with a smile. Then they fell into position. The crowd gave a long sigh—the intake of a thousand excited breaths. The referee tilted his chair on to its back legs, and looked moodily critical from the one to the other.

It was strength against activity—that was evident from the first. The Master stood stolidly upon his K-leg. It gave him a tremendous pedestal; one could hardly imagine his being knocked down. And he could pivot round upon it with extraordinary quickness; but his advance or retreat was ungainly. His frame, however, was so much larger and broader than that of the student, and his brown, massive face looked so resolute and menacing, that the hearts of the Wilson party sank within

them. There was one heart, however, which had not done so. It was that of Robert Montgomery.

Any nervousness which he may have had completely passed away now that he had his work before him. Here was something definite—this hard-faced, deformed Hercules to beat, with a career as the price of beating him. He glowed with the joy of action; it thrilled through his nerves. He faced his man with little in-and-out steps, breaking to the left, breaking to the right, feeling his way, while Craggs, with a dull, malignant eye, pivoted slowly upon his weak leg, his left arm half extended, his right sunk low across the mark. Montgomery led with his left, and then led again, getting lightly home each time. He tried again, but the Master had his counter ready, and Montgomery reeled back from a harder blow than he had given. Anastasia, the woman, gave a shrill cry of encouragement, and her man let fly his right. Montgomery ducked under it, and in an instant the two were in each other's arms.

"Break away! Break away!" said the referee.

The Master struck upwards on the break, and shook Montgomery with the blow. Then it was "time." It had been a spirited opening round. The people buzzed into comment and applause. Montgomery was quite fresh, but the hairy chest of the Master was rising and falling. The man passed a sponge over his head, while Anastasia flapped the towel before him. "Good lass! Good lass!" cried the crowd, and cheered her.

The men were up again, the Master grimly watchful, Montgomery as alert as a kitten. The Master tried a sudden rush, squattering along with his awkward gait, but coming faster than one would think. The student slipped aside and avoided him. The Master stopped, grinned, and shook his head. Then he motioned with his hand as an invitation to Montgomery to come to him. The student did so and led with his left, but got a swinging right counter in the ribs in exchange. The heavy blow staggered him, and the Master came scrambling in to complete his advantage; but Montgomery, with his greater activity, kept out of danger until the call of "time." A tame round, and the advantage with the Master.

"T' Maister's too strong for him," said a smelter to his neighbour.

"Ay; but t'other's a likely lad. Happen we'll see some sport yet. He can joomp rarely."

"But t' Maister can stop and hit rarely. Happen he'll mak' him joomp when he gets his neif upon him."

They were up again, the water glistening upon their faces. Montgomery led instantly and got his right home with a sounding smack upon the Master's forehead. There was a shout from the colliers, and "Silence! Order!" from the referee. Montgomery avoided the counter and scored with his left. Fresh applause, and the referee upon his feet in indignation. "No comments, gentlemen, if *you* please, during the rounds."

"Just bide a bit!" growled the Master.

"Don't talk—fight!" said the referee angrily.

Montgomery rubbed in the point by a flush hit upon the mouth, and the Master shambled back to his corner like an angry bear, having had all the worst of the round.

"Where's that seven to one?" shouted Purvis, the publican. "I'll take six to one!"

There were no answers.

"Five to one!" There were givers at that. Purvis booked them in a tattered notebook.

Montgomery began to feel happy. He lay back with his legs outstretched, his back against the corner-post, and one gloved hand upon each rope. What a delicious minute it was between each round. If he could only keep out of harm's way, he must surely wear this man out before the end of twenty rounds. He was so slow that all his strength went for nothing. "You're fightin' a winnin' fight—a winnin' fight," Ted Barton whispered in his ear. "Go canny; tak' no chances; you have him proper."

But the Master was crafty. He had fought so many battles with his maimed limb that he knew how to make the best of it. Warily and slowly he manœuvred round Montgomery, stepping forward and yet again forward until he had imperceptibly backed him into his corner. The student suddenly saw a flash of triumph upon the grim face, and a gleam in the dull, malignant eyes. The Master was upon him. He sprang aside and was on the ropes. The Master smashed in one of his terrible upper-cuts, and Montgomery half broke it with his guard. The student sprang the other way and was against the other con-

verging rope. He was trapped in the angle. The Master sent in another, with a hoggish grunt which spoke of the energy behind it. Montgomery ducked, but got a jab from the left upon the mark. He closed with his man. "Break away! Break away!" cried the referee. Montgomery disengaged and got a swinging blow on the ear as he did so. It had been a damaging round for him, and the Croxley people were shouting their delight.

"Gentlemen, I will *not* have this noise!" Stapleton roared. "I have been accustomed to preside at a well-conducted club, and not at a bear-garden." This little man, with the tilted hat and the bulging forehead, dominated the whole assembly. He was like a headmaster among his boys. He glared round him, and nobody cared to meet his eye.

Anastasia had kissed the Master when he resumed his seat. "Good lass. Do't again!" cried the laughing crowd, and the angry Master shook his glove at her, as she flapped her towel in front of him. Montgomery was weary and a little sore, but not depressed. He had learned something. He would not again be tempted into danger.

For three rounds the honours were fairly equal. The student's hitting was the quicker, the Master's the harder. Profiting by his lesson, Montgomery kept himself in the open, and refused to be herded into a corner. Sometimes the Master succeeded in rushing him to the side-ropes, but the younger man slipped away, or closed, and then disengaged. The monotonous "Break away! Break away!" of the referee broke in upon the quick, low patter of rubber-soled shoes, the dull thud of the blows, and the sharp, hissing breath of two tired men.

The ninth round found both of them in fairly good condition. Montgomery's head was still singing from the blow that he had in the corner, and one of his thumbs pained him acutely and seemed to be dislocated. The Master showed no sign of a touch, but his breathing was the more laboured, and a long line of ticks upon the referee's paper showed that the student had a good show of points. But one of this iron-man's blows was worth three of his, and he knew that without gloves he could not have stood for three rounds against him. All the amateur work that he had done was the merest tapping and flapping when compared to these frightful blows, from arms toughened by the shovel and the crowbar.

It was the tenth round, and the fight was half over. The betting now was only three to one, for the Wilson champion had held his own much better than had been expected. But those who knew the ring craft as well as the staying-power of the old prize-fighter knew that the odds were still a long way in his favour.

"Have a care of him!" whispered Barton, as he sent his man up to the scratch. "Have a care! He'll play thee a trick, if he can."

But Montgomery saw, or imagined he saw, that his antagonist was tiring. He looked jaded and listless, and his hands drooped a little from their position. His own youth and condition were beginning to tell. He sprang in and brought off a fine left-handed lead. The Master's return lacked his usual fire. Again Montgomery led, and again he got home. Then he tried his right upon the mark, and the Master guarded it downwards.

"Too low! Too low! A foul! A foul!" yelled a thousand voices.

The referee rolled his sardonic eyes slowly round. "Seems to me this buildin' is chock-full of referees," said he.

The people laughed and applauded, but their favour was as immaterial to him as their anger.

"No applause, please! This is not a theatre!" he yelled.

Montgomery was very pleased with himself. His adversary was evidently in a bad way. He was piling on his points and establishing a lead. He might as well make hay while the sun shone. The Master was looking all abroad. Montgomery popped one upon his blue jowl and got away without a return. And then the Master suddenly dropped both his hands and began rubbing his thigh. Ah! that was it, was it! He had muscular cramp.

"Go in! Go in!" cried Teddy Barton.

Montgomery sprang wildly forward, and the next instant was lying half senseless, with his neck nearly broken, in the middle of the ring.

¶

THE whole round had been a long conspiracy to tempt him within reach of one of those terrible right-hand upper-cuts for which the Master was famous. For this the listless, weary bearing, for this the cramp in the thigh. When Montgomery had sprang in so hotly he had exposed himself to

such a blow as neither flesh nor blood could stand. Whizzing up from below with a rigid arm, which put the Master's eleven stone into its force, it struck him under the jaw: he whirled half round, and fell a helpless and half-paralysed mass. A vague groan and murmur, inarticulate, too excited for words, rose from the great audience. With open mouths and staring eyes they gazed at the twitching and quivering figure.

"Stand back! Stand right back!" shrieked the referee, for the Master was standing over his man ready to give him the *coup de grâce* as he rose.

"Stand back, Craggs, this instant!" Stapleton repeated.

The Master sank his hands sulkily and walked backwards to the rope with his ferocious eyes fixed upon his fallen antagonist. The timekeeper called the seconds. If ten of them passed before Montgomery rose to his feet, the fight was ended. Ted Barton wrung his hands and danced about in an agony in his corner.

As if in a dream—a terrible nightmare—the student could hear the voice of the timekeeper—three—four—five—he got up on his hand—six—seven—he was on his knee, sick, swimming, faint, but resolute to rise. Eight—he was up, and the Master was on him like a tiger, lashing savagely at him with both hands. Folk held their breath as they watched those terrible blows and anticipated the pitiful end—so much more pitiful where a game but helpless man refuses to accept defeat.

Strangely automatic is the human brain. Without volition, without effort, there shot into the memory of this bewildered, staggering, half-stupefied man the one thing which could have saved him—that blind eye of which the Master's son had spoken. It was the same as the other to look at, but Montgomery remembered that he had said that it was the left. He reeled to the left side, half felled by a drive which lit upon his shoulder. The Master pivoted round upon his leg and was at him in an instant.

"Yark him, lad! yark him!" screamed the woman.

"Hold your tongue!" said the referee.

Montgomery slipped to the left again and yet again; but the Master was too quick and clever for him. He struck round and got him full on the face as he tried once more to break away. Montgomery's knees weakened under him, and he fell with a groan on the floor. This time he knew that he was done. With bitter agony he realized, as he groped blindly with his hands, that he could not possibly raise himself. Far away and muffled he heard, amid the murmurs of the multitude, the fateful voice of the timekeeper counting the seconds.

"One — two — three — four — five — six——"

"Time!" said the referee.

Then the pent-up passion of the great assembly broke loose. Croxley gave a deep groan of disappointment. The Wilsons were on their feet, yelling their delight. There was still a chance for them. In four more seconds their man would have been solemnly counted out. But now he had a minute in which to recover. The referee looked round with relaxed features and laughing eyes. He loved this rough game, this school for humble heroes, and it was pleasant to him to intervene as a *deus ex machina* at so dramatic a moment. His chair and his hat were both tilted at an extreme angle; he and the timekeeper smiled at each other. Ted Barton and the other second had rushed out and thrust an arm each under Montgomery's knee, the other behind his loins, and so carried him back to his stool. His head lolled upon his shoulder, but a douche of cold water sent a shiver through him, and he started and looked round him.

"He's a' right!" cried the people round. "He's a rare brave lad. Good lad! Good lad!" Barton poured some brandy into his mouth. The mists cleared a little, and he realized where he was and what he had to do. But he was still very weak, and he hardly dared to hope that he could survive another round.

"Seconds out of the ring!" cried the referee. "Time!"

The Croxley Master sprang eagerly off his stool.

"Keep clear of him! Go easy for a bit," said Barton; and Montgomery walked out to meet his man once more.

He had had two lessons—the one when the Master got him into his corner, the other when he had been lured into mixing it up with so powerful an antagonist. Now he would be wary. Another blow would finish him; he could afford to run no risks. The Master was determined to follow up his advantage, and rushed at him, slogging furiously right and left. But Montgomery was too young and active to be

caught. He was strong upon his legs once more, and his wits had all come back to him. It was a gallant sight—the line-of-battleship trying to pour its overwhelming broadside into the frigate, and the frigate manœuvring always so as to avoid it. The Master tried all his ring-craft. He coaxed the student up by pretended inactivity; he rushed at him with furious rushes towards the ropes. For three rounds he exhausted every wile in trying to get at him. Montgomery during all this time was conscious that his strength was minute by minute coming back to him. The spinal jar from an upper-cut is overwhelming, but evanescent. He was losing all sense of it beyond a great stiffness of the neck. For the first round after his downfall he had been content to be entirely on the defensive, only too happy if he could stall off the furious attacks of the Master. In the second he occasionally ventured upon a light counter. In the third he was smacking back merrily where he saw an opening. His people yelled their approval of him at the end of every round. Even the iron-workers cheered him with that fine unselfishness which true sport engenders. To most of them, unspiritual and unimaginative, the sight of this clean-limbed young Apollo, rising above disaster and holding on while consciousness was in him to his appointed task, was the greatest thing their experience had ever known.

But the Master's naturally morose temper became more and more murderous at this postponement of his hopes. Three rounds ago the battle had been in his hands; now it was all to do over again. Round by round his man was recovering his strength. By the fifteenth he was strong again in wind and limb. But the vigilant Anastasia saw something which encouraged her.

"That bash in t' ribs is telling on him, Jock," she whispered. "Why else should he be gulping t' brandy? Go in, lad, and thou hast him yet."

Montgomery had suddenly taken the flask from Barton's hand, and had a deep pull at the contents. Then, with his face a little flushed, and with a curious look of purpose, which made the referee stare hard at him, in his eyes, he rose for the sixteenth round.

"Game as a pairtridge!" cried the publican, as he looked at the hard-set face.

"Mix it oop, lad; mix it oop!" cried the iron-men to their Master.

And then a hum of exultation ran through their ranks as they realized that their tougher, harder, stronger man held the vantage, after all.

Neither of the men showed much sign of punishment. Small gloves crush and numb, but they do not cut. One of the Master's eyes was even more flush with his cheek than Nature had made it. Montgomery had two or three livid marks upon his body, and his face was haggard, save for that pink spot which the brandy had brought into either cheek. He rocked a little as he stood opposite his man, and his hands drooped as if he felt the gloves to be an unutterable weight. It was evident that he was spent and desperately weary. If he received one other blow it must surely be fatal to him. If he brought one home, what power could there be behind it, and what chance was there of its harming the colossus in front of him? It was the crisis of the fight. This round must decide it. "Mix it oop, lad; mix it oop!" the iron-men whooped. Even the savage eyes of the referee were unable to restrain the excited crowd.

Now, at last, the chance had come for Montgomery. He had learned a lesson from his more experienced rival. Why should he not play his own game upon him? He was spent, but not nearly so spent as he pretended. That brandy was to call up his reserves to let him have strength to take full advantage of the opening when it came. It was thrilling and tingling through his veins, at the very moment when he was lurching and rocking like a beaten man. He acted his part admirably. The Master felt that there was an easy task before him, and rushed in with ungainly activity to finish it once for all. He slap-banged away left and right, boring Montgomery up against the ropes, swinging in his ferocious blows with those animal grunts which told of the vicious energy behind them.

But Montgomery was too cool to fall a victim to any of those murderous upper-cuts. He kept out of harm's way with a rigid guard, an active foot, and a head which was swift to duck. And yet he contrived to present the same appearance of a man who is hopelessly done. The Master, weary from his own shower of blows, and fearing nothing from so weak a man, dropped his hand for an instant, and at that instant Montgomery's right came home.

It was a magnificent blow, straight, clean, crisp, with the force of the loins and the back behind it. And it landed where he had meant it to—upon the exact point of that blue-grained chin. Flesh and blood could not stand such a blow in such a place. Neither valour nor hardihood can save the man to whom it comes. The Master fell backwards, flat, prostrate, striking the ground with so simultaneous a clap that it was like a shutter falling from a wall. A yell which no referee could control broke from the crowded benches as the giant went down. He lay upon his back, his knees a little drawn up, his huge chest panting. He twitched and shook, but could not move. His feet pawed convulsively once or twice. It was no use. He was done. "Eight—nine—ten!" said the timekeeper, and the roar of a thousand voices, with a deafening clap like the broadside of a ship, told that the Master of Croxley was the Master no more.

Montgomery stood half dazed, looking down at the huge, prostrate figure. He could hardly realize that it was indeed all over. He saw the referee motion towards him with his hand. He heard his name bellowed in triumph from every side. And then he was aware of some one rushing towards him; he caught a glimpse of a flushed face and an aureole of flying red hair, a gloveless fist struck him between the eyes, and he was on his back in the ring beside his antagonist, while a dozen of his supporters were endeavouring to secure the frantic Anastasia. He heard the angry shouting of the referee, the screaming of the furious woman, and the cries of the mob. Then something seemed to break like an over-stretched banjo-string, and he sank into the deep, deep, mist-girt abyss of unconsciousness.

The dressing was like a thing in a dream, and so was a vision of the Master with the grin of a bulldog upon his face, and his three teeth amiably protruded. He shook Montgomery heartily by the hand.

"I would have been rare pleased to shake thee by the throttle, lad, a short while syne," said he. "But I bear no ill-feelin' again' thee. It was a rare poonch that brought me down—I have not had a better since my second fight wi' Billy Edwards in '89. Happen thou might think o' goin' further wi' this business. If thou dost, and want a trainer, there's not much inside t' ropes as I don't know. Or happen thou might like to try it on wi' me old style and bare knuckles. Thou hast but to write to t' ironworks to find me."

But Montgomery disclaimed any such ambition. A canvas bag with his share—one hundred and ninety sovereigns—was handed to him, of which he gave ten to the Master, who also received some share of the gate-money. Then, with young Wilson escorting him on one side, Purvis on the other, and Fawcett carrying his bag behind, he went in triumph to his carriage, and drove amid a long roar, which lined the highway like a hedge for the seven miles, back to his starting-point.

"It's the greatest thing I ever saw in my life. By George, it's ripping!" cried Wilson, who had been left in a kind of ecstasy by the events of the day. "There's a chap over Barnsley way who fancies himself a bit. Let us spring you on him, and let him see what he can make of you. We'll put up a purse—won't we, Purvis? You shall never want a backer."

"At his weight," said the publican, "I'm behind him, I am, for twenty rounds, and no age, country, or colour barred."

"So am I!" cried Fawcett; "middle-weight champion of the world, that's what he is—here, in the same carriage with us."

But Montgomery was not to be beguiled.

"No; I have my own work to do now."

"And what may that be?"

"I'll use this money to get my medical degree."

"Well, we've plenty of doctors, but you're the only man in the Riding that could smack the Croxley Master off his legs. However, I suppose you know you're own business best. When you're a doctor you'd best come down into these parts, and you'll always find a job waiting for you at the Wilson coal-pits."

Montgomery had returned by devious ways to the surgery. The horses were smoking at the door and the doctor was just back from his long journey. Several patients had called in his absence, and he was in the worst of tempers.

"I suppose I should be glad that you have come back at all, Mr. Montgomery!" he snarled. "When next you elect to take a holiday, I trust it will not be at so busy a time."

"I am sorry, sir, that you should have been inconvenienced."

"Yes, sir, I have been exceedingly

inconvenienced." Here, for the first time, he looked hard at the assistant. "Good heavens, Mr. Montgomery, what have you been doing with your left eye?"

It was where Anastasia had lodged her protest.

Montgomery laughed. "It is nothing, sir," said he.

"And you have a livid mark under your jaw. It is, indeed, terrible that my representative should be going about in so disreputable a condition. How did you receive these injuries?"

"Well, sir, as you know, there was a little glove-fight to-day over at Croxley."

"And you got mixed up with that brutal crowd?"

"I *was* rather mixed up with them."

"And who assaulted you?"

"One of the fighters."

"Which of them?"

"The Master of Croxley."

"Good heavens! Perhaps you interfered with him?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I did a little."

"Mr. Montgomery, in such a practice as mine, intimately associated as it is with the highest and most progressive elements of our small community, it is impossible——"

But just then the tentative bray of a cornet-player searching for his keynote jarred upon their ears, and an instant later the Wilson Colliery brass band was in full cry with "See the Conquering Hero Comes" outside the surgery window.

"What is it? What does it mean?" cried the angry doctor.

"It means, sir, that I have, in the only way which was open to me, earned the money which is necessary for my education. It is my duty, Doctor Oldacre, to warn you that I am about to return to the University, and that you should lose no time in appointing my successor."

Home-made History :: *No. II—WILLIAM II.*

I

THIS monarch's early life was sad,
And sad it is to say it, he
Was but a melancholy lad,
Whose days had little gaiety;
And tears he shed at night in bed
Because his royal hair was red!

II

The earliest recorded act
With which his reign is credited,
Displayed a want of kingly tact.
Historians have said it did,
And they no doubt have worried out
The truth of what they talk about.

III

They say he made a sudden dash,
When nobody expected it,
And, falling on the nation's cash,
Unto himself collected it;
A handsome pile which for awhile
Enabled him to live in style.

IV

Although by nature he was blessed
With none too much sagacity,
For spending money he possessed
An infinite capacity;
And it is sad to have to add
The more he got, the less he had.

V

The laws he made, though very few,
Were models of severity;
They principally had to do
With those whose rash temerity
Led them to shoot or bird or brute,
However common or minute.

VI

The King would frequently exclaim:
"I tell you what is wanted is
An adequate supply of game,
And stags in larger quantities!"
And it was sport of this same sort
That cut his reign extremely short.

VII

Around his tragic fate there clings
A sable shroud of mystery;
It must be numbered with the things
Of undiscovered history.
Yet I contend he met his end
By indiscretion of a friend.

VIII

A friend who (let it be confessed,
I quite forget the name of him),
Shot at the King by way of jest,
Attempting to make game of him!
A deed begun in simple fun,
Unfortunately overdone.

HANSARD WATT.

"The Best Short Story I Have Read"

Opinions by Famous Authors

Alfred Noyes—W. J. Locke—Sheila Kaye-Smith —Thomas Burke — Ian Hay — Max Pemberton — Marjorie Bowen — H. de Vere Stacpoole — Ernest Raymond—Radclyffe Hall, etc.

IN my judgment, where there are so many different kinds, it is almost impossible to pick out an absolute best. One cannot compare a humorous and a tragic story, for instance. But I should like to say this—that outside the two or three masters of the short story in France, there are very few stories anywhere to be compared with the best in Barry Pain's "Stories in Grey," and "Here and Hereafter." The reasons for my saying this are as follows:—

(*a*) The characters are really human living individuals, drawn without exaggeration, and with a quiet truth of observation that the merely literary short story never achieves.

(*b*) That the style and form of these stories are masterly, both in what they omit and in what they include, though the quietness which characterizes the mastery of a man who really knows what he is about is less immediately striking to commonplace minds than what is exaggerated, or merely flamboyantly untrue.

(*c*) That the art in them is concealed by the artist who created them, so that the careless reader does not realize that these living characters are creations of art at all. They are absolutely without pose or affectation of any kind; and, in such little masterpieces of pathos as "The End of the Story," we have work that de Maupassant never surpassed. "The Commonplace," too, is simply a masterpiece. Critics in search of fashions don't know it; but when have they ever known?

ALFRED NOYES.

HANS ANDERSEN'S "Ugly Duckling." Because—straining after nothing, and simple as the children for whom it was written, it sits on the very knees of Truth, to be recognized as her child by countless men and women throughout the ages.

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.

THE most perfect short story in the world—the most flawless according to any conceivable canon of literary art—is the story of Joseph and his Brethren, as rendered in our authorised version.

W. J. LOCKE.

I THINK the honours are divided. Kipling's "Greatest Story in the World" and Guy de Maupassant's "Boule de Suif" are the two greatest stories I know. But I never forget that Dickens wrote some wonderful stories. "The Bagman's Story" in "Pickwick," and the "Madman's Story" are both masterpieces.

In detective fiction, Conan Doyle's "Speckled Band," and Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue," are matchless.

MAX PEMBERTON.

I THINK the best short story I have ever read is contained in the first two chapters of The Book of Genesis, as translated into English in the reign of James I. The reason is that I have never known it surpassed for drama, poetry, symbolism, beauty of language and terseness—nor, one might add, for popularity.

Among modern work, I would choose any one of Mr. Algernon Blackwood's short stories because they open doors on other worlds than one. MARJORIE BOWEN.

I AM afraid I am quite unable to dogmatize about short stories. Katherine Mansfield's " The Doll's House," and de Maupassant's " Chali," are two that impressed me very deeply at the time of reading. The former because of its complete mastery of the very slight material which the author had chosen for her work, the latter because of the beauty and irony of the situation.

SHEILA FRY (SHEILA KAYE-SMITH).

I HAVE never yet managed to elevate any one short story or novel to the position of " The best I know." It depends entirely on the angle from which the tale is criticized; this one may be the best in technique, this in appeal, this in power, and another in depth and universality. Or one may be the best of the " eerie " type, and another of the " love stories."

There are leaping into my mind, as I try to find a " best," stories by Kipling, Ambrose Bierce, Conrad, Tchehov, Anatole France, Katherine Mansfield, and so on. One little gem by Guy de Maupassant, perhaps, comes nearer to being a " best " in several categories at once, and that is his " Two Fishers."

Here we have a marvellous mastery and economy of words, a poignant little tale, a technical arrangement which he never surpassed, and a power to haunt the reader for a lifetime. I read it fifteen years ago, and though I have never read it again, can recite whole passages of it almost word for word.

ERNEST RAYMOND.

FOR many years, I regarded de Maupassant's " Boule de Suif " and his " Collier de Perles " as the high-water mark of the short story. Some pontiff said that they were perfect; and I accepted this as final. Then Kipling cast his spell upon me; and, later on, O. Henry, not to mention Jacobs and many others. I dare not dogmatize upon what is loosely termed " best " in any of the four arts; I cannot jot down " points," as I should do if I were judging a horse or a hound. But that, I suppose, would be the right way to set about so ungracious a task—so many marks for style, plot, narrative and dialogue, not forgetting humour, and eliminating what is morbid and gross and unconvincing.

Is there any man living who can say that *one* miniature is the best in the world? In this symposium, the Editor, of course, is asking for a personal opinion, the more personal the better; and a work of art ought to be impersonal, universal in its appeal. Kipling's " Village that voted the Earth was Flat " is an amazing achievement, but does he acclaim it as his " best "? Probably not. But the humour of it captivates me more than anything else he has written, and his astounding knowledge of human nature paralyses my critical faculties—if I have any. Ask another, please!

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

The Best Short Story I Have Read

TO my mind the greatest short story in the world is the Gospel according to St. Mark. Descending from this to common levels, my choice is Balzac's " Le Peau de Chagrin." THOMAS BURKE.

PERSONALLY, my favourite short story in all fiction is " Bread Upon the Waters," in Kipling's " The Day's Work." After that, I should say Stevenson's " Bottle Imp." IAN HAY.

IT was in 1923 that I first read " Greatness and Jamey Pobjoy," and read it in a book of short stories by I. A. R. Wylie, entitled, " Side Shows." I said then : " This is by far the best short story that I have ever read," and no short story that has since come my way has caused me to alter my opinion.

The short story should read like a novel, to my mind, a novel that draws to its natural conclusion without signs of undue haste. " Not easy ! " you will say—no, very far from easy—a task, indeed, that requires the utmost skill ; that is why I am such a sincere admirer of " Greatness and Jamey Pobjoy."

In Jamey Pobjoy we come to know the white man whose ambition is made subject to his heart, or rather to that fullness of spiritual insight that should form a part of governing peoples. He lets slip the greatest chance in his career because he is too " white " to take it.

In that story we are made to feel, in thirty odd pages, the tragedy of subject races in decay—a vast theme suggested in a limited space, yet so deftly that one is in no way oppressed by the irritating feeling of telegraphese which mars so much short story writing. Miss Wylie's North American Indian " Son-of-His-Father " becomes, as we read, the incarnation of all those whose finest attributes have perished in the wake of civilization—since many must perish for the good of the whole, and the whole in this world is imperfect.

As we read, we are not in our smug English homes, but away on the great inscrutable desert, we are sharing in the pitiful and passing resurrection of gone-to-seed-Indians led by their Chief into glories that they cannot sustain. We are sharing in the terror and exultation of little Jamey Pobjoy as he clings to his post turning the wheel of his cinema machine, capturing the picture of the death-throes of a race for the edification of his public. And then—but I will not tell of the end, those who would know it can read it for themselves, and in doing so can see why I have chosen this short story as being, at all events, in my opinion, the best that I have ever read. RADCLYFFE HALL.

Grit of Women

Drama and heroism on a lone trail

By JACK LONDON

A WOLFISH head, wistful-eyed and frost-rimmed, thrust aside the tent-flaps.

"Hi! Chook! Siwash! Chook, you limb of Satan!" chorused the protesting inmates. Bettles rapped the dog sharply with a tin plate, and it withdrew hastily. Louis Savoy refastened the flaps, kicked a frying-pan over against the bottom and warmed his hands. It was very cold without. Forty-eight hours gone, the spirit thermometer had burst at sixty-eight below, and since that time it had grown steadily colder. There was no telling when the snap would end.

It was very cold without, but it was not over-warm within. The only article which might be designated furniture was the stove, and for this the men were frank in displaying their preference. Upon half of the floor pine boughs had been cast; above this were spread the sleeping-furs, beneath lay the winter's snowfall. The remainder of the floor was moccasin-packed snow, littered with pots and pans and the general impedimenta of an Arctic camp. The stove was red and roaring hot, but only a bare three feet away lay a block of ice, as sharp-edged and dry as when first quarried from the creek bottom.

"Look you, brothers," began Sitka Charley from his seat on the grub-box. "Ye have spoken of the streak of fat that runs in big men's muscles, of the grit of women and the love, and ye have spoken fair; but I have in mind things which happened when the land was young and the fires of men apart as the stars. It was then I had concern with a big man, and a streak of fat, and a woman. And the woman was small, but her heart was greater than the beef-heart of the man, and she had grit. And we travelled a weary trail, even to the Salt Water, and the cold was bitter, the snow deep, the hunger great. And the woman's love was a mighty love—no more can man say than this."

He paused, and with the hatchet broke pieces of ice from the large chunk beside him. These he threw into the gold pan on the stove, where the drinking water thawed.

"Brothers, my blood is red with Siwash, but my heart is white. To the faults of my fathers I owe the one, to the virtues of my friends the other. A great truth came to me when I was yet a boy. I learned that to your kind and you was given the earth; that the Siwash could not withstand you, and, like the caribou and the bear, must perish in the cold. So I came into the warm and sat among you, by your fires, and behold, I became one of you. I have seen much in my time. I have known strange things and bucked big, on big trails, with men of many breeds. And because of these things I measure deeds after your manner, and judge men, and think thoughts. Wherefore, when I speak harshly of one of your own kind I know you will not take it amiss, and when I speak high of one of my father's people you will not take it upon you to say: 'Sitka Charley is Siwash and there is a crooked light in his eyes and small honour to his tongue.' Is it not so?"

Deep down in throat the circle vouchsafed its assent.

"The woman was Passuk. I got her in fair trade from her people, who were of the coast, and whose Chilcat totem stood at the head of a salt arm of the sea. My heart did not go out to the woman, nor did I take stock of her looks. For she scarce took her eyes from the ground, and she was timid and afraid, as girls will be when cast into a stranger's arms whom they have never seen before. As I say, there was no place in my heart for her to creep, for I had a great journey in mind, and stood in need of one to feed my dogs and to lift a paddle with me through the long river days. One blanket would cover the twain, so I chose Passuk.

"Have I not said I was a servant to the Government? If not it is well that ye know. So I was taken on a warship, sleds and dogs

and evaporated foods, and with me came Passuk. And we went north, to the winter ice-rim of Behring Sea, where we landed—myself and Passuk and the dogs. I was also given moneys of the Government, for I was its servant, and charts of lands which the eyes of man had never dwelt upon, and messages. These messages were sealed and protected shrewdly from the weather, and I was to deliver them to the whale ships of the Arctic, icebound by the great Mackenzie. Never was there so great a river, forgetting only our own Yukon, the Mother of all Rivers.

"All of which is neither here nor there, for my story deals not with the whale ships, nor the berg-bound winter I spent by the Mackenzie. Afterward, in the spring, when the days lengthened and there was a crust to the snow, we came south, Passuk and I, to the country of the Yukon. A weary journey, but the sun pointed out the way of our feet. It was a naked land then, as I have said, and we worked up the current with pole and paddle till we came to Forty Mile. Good it was to see white faces once again, so we put into the bank. And that winter was a hard winter. The darkness and the cold drew down upon us, and with them the famine. To each man the agent of the company gave forty pounds of flour and twenty of bacon. There were no beans. And the dogs howled always, and there were flat bellies and deep-lined faces, and strong men became weak, and weak men died. There was also much scurvy.

"Then we came together in the store one night, and the empty shelves made us feel our own emptiness the more. We talked low, by the light of the fire, for the candles had been set aside for those who might yet gasp in the spring. Discussion was held, and it was said that a man must go forth to the Salt Water and tell to the world our misery. At this all eyes turned to me, for it was understood that I was a great traveller. 'It is seven hundred miles,' said I, 'to Haines Mission by the sea, and every inch of it snowshoe work. Give me the pick of your dogs and the best of your grub and I will go. And with me shall go Passuk.'

"To this they were agreed. But there arose one, Long Jeff, a Yankee man, big-boned and big-muscled. Also his talk was big. He, too, was a mighty traveller, he said, born to the snowshoe and bred up on buffalo milk. He would go with me, in case I fell by the trail, that he might carry the word on to the mission. I was young, and I knew not Yankee men. How was I to know that big talk betokened the streak of fat, or that Yankee men who did great things kept their teeth together? So we took the pick of the dogs and the best of the grub and struck the trail, we three—Passuk, Long Jeff, and I.

"Well, ye have broken virgin snow, laboured at the gee-pole, and are not unused to the packed river-jams, so I will talk little of the toil, save that some days we made ten miles, and on others thirty, but more often ten. And the best of the grub was not good, while we went on stint from the start. Likewise, the pick of the dogs were poor, and we were hard put to keep them on their legs. At the White River our three sleds became two sleds, and we had only come two hundred miles. But we lost nothing; the dogs that left the traces went into the bellies of those that remained.

"Not a greeting, not a curl of smoke till we made Pelly. Here I had counted on grub, and here I had counted on leaving Long Jeff, who was whining and trail-sore. But the factor's lungs were wheezing, his eyes bright, his cache nigh empty, and he showed us the empty cache of the missionary, also his grave with the rocks piled high to keep off the dogs. There was a bunch of Indians there, but babies and old men there were none, and it was clear that few would see the spring.

"So we pulled on, light-stomached and heavy-hearted, with half a thousand miles of snow and silence between us and Haines Mission by the sea. The darkness was at its worst, and at midday the sun could not clear the skyline to the south. But the ice-jams were smaller, the going better, so I pushed the dogs hard and travelled late and early. As I said, at Forty Mile, every inch of it was snowshoe. And the shoes made great sores on our feet, which cracked and scabbed, but would not heal. And every day these sores grew more grievous, till the morning when we girded on the shoes, Long Jeff cried like a child. I put him at the fore of the light sled to break trail, but he slipped off the shoes for comfort. Because of this the trail was not packed, his moccasins made great holes, and into these holes the dogs wallowed. The bones of the dogs were ready to break through their hides, and this was not good

for them. So I spoke hard words to the man and he promised, and broke his word. Then I beat him with the dog-whip, and after that the dogs wallowed no more. He was a child, what of the pain and the streak of fat.

"But Passuk. While the man lay by the fire and wept, she cooked, and in the morning helped lash the sleds, and in the evening to unlash them. And she saved the dogs. Ever was she to the fore, lifting the webbed shoes and making the way easy. Passuk—how shall I say?—I took it for granted that she could do these things, and thought no more about it. For my mind was busy with other matters, and, besides, I was young in years and knew little of women. It was only on looking back that I came to understand.

"And the man became worthless. The dogs had little strength in them, but he stole rides on the sled when he lagged behind. Passuk said she would take one sled, so the man had nothing to do. In the morning I gave him his fair share of grub and started him on the trail alone. Then the woman and I broke camp, packed the sleds and harnessed the dogs. By midday, when the sun mocked us, we would overtake the man, with the tears frozen down his cheeks, and pass him. In the night we made camp, set aside his fair share of grub, and spread his furs. Also we made a big fire, that he might see. And hours afterwards he would come limping in and eat his grub with moans and groans and sleep. He was not sick, this man. He was only trail-sore and tired, and weak with hunger. But Passuk and I were trail-sore and tired and weak with hunger, and we did all the work and he did none. But he had the streak of fat of which our brother Bettles has spoken. Further, we gave the man always his fair share of grub.

"Then one day we met two ghosts journeying through the silence. They were a man and a boy, and they were white. The ice had opened on Lake Le Barge, and through it had gone their main outfit. One blanket each carried about his shoulders. At night they built a fire and crouched over it till morning. They had a little flour. This they stirred in warm water and drank. The man showed me eight cups of flour—all they had—and Pelly, stricken with famine, two hundred miles away. They said, also, that there was an Indian behind; that they had whacked fair, but that he could not keep up. I did not believe they had whacked fair, else would the Indian have kept up. But I could give them no grub. They strove to steal a dog—the fattest, which was very thin—but I shoved my pistol in their faces and told them begone. And they went away, like drunken men, through the Silence towards Pelly.

"I had three dogs now, and one sled, and the dogs were only bones and hair. When there is little wood, the fire burns low and the cabin grows cold. So with us. With little grub the frost bites sharp, and our faces were black and frozen, till our mothers would not have known us. And our feet were very sore. In the morning, when I hit the trail, I sweated to keep down the cry when the pain of the snowshoes smote me. Passuk never opened her lips, but stepped to the fore to break the way. The man howled.

"The Thirty Mile was swift, and the current ate away the ice from beneath, and there were many air-holes and cracks, and much open water. One day we came upon a man resting, for he had gone ahead, as was his wont, in the morning. But between us was open water. This he had passed around by taking to the rim-ice where it was too narrow for a sled. So we found an ice bridge. Passuk weighed little, and went first, with a long pole crosswise in her hands, in chance she broke through. But she was light, and her shoes large, and she passed over. Then she called the dogs. But they had neither pole nor shoes, and they broke through and were swept under by the water. I held tight to the sled from behind, till the traces broke and the dogs went on down under the ice. There was little meat to them, but I had counted on them for a week's grub, and they were gone.

"The next morning I divided all the grub, which was little, into three portions. And I told Long Jeff that he could keep up with us or not, as he saw fit; for we were going to travel light and fast. But he raised his voice and cried over his sore feet and his troubles, and said harsh things against comradeship. Passuk's feet were sore, and my feet were sore—aye, sorer than his, for we had worked with the dogs; also, we looked to see. Long Jeff swore he would die before he hit the trail again; so Passuk took a fur robe, and I a cooking pot and an axe, and we made ready to go. But she looked on the man's portion and said:

'It is wrong to waste good food on a baby. He is better dead.' I shook my head and said no, that a comrade once was a comrade always. Then she spoke of the men of Forty Mile; that they were many men and good, and that they looked to me for grub in the spring. But when I still said no, she snatched the pistol from my belt quick, and as our brother Bettles has spoken, Long Jeff went to the bosom of Abraham before his time. I chided Passuk for this; but she showed no sorrow, nor was she sorrowful. And in my heart I knew she was right."

Sitka Charley paused and threw pieces of ice into the gold-pan on the stove. The men were silent, and their backs chilled to the sobbing cries of the dogs as they gave tongue to their misery in the outer cold. "And day by day we passed in the snow the sleeping-places of the two ghosts—Passuk and I—and we knew we would be glad for such ere we made Salt Water. Then we came to the Indian, like another ghost, with his face set towards Pelly. They had not whacked up fair, the man and the boy, he said, and he had had no flour for three days. Each night he boiled pieces of his moccasins in a cup and ate them. He did not have much moccasins left. And he was a coast Indian, and told us these things through Passuk, who talked his tongue. He was a stranger in the Yukon, and he knew not the way, but his face was set to Pelly.

"He did not ask for grub, for he could see we, too, were hard up. Passuk looked at the man and at me, as though she were of two minds, like a mother partridge whose young are in trouble. So I turned to her and said: 'This man has been dealt unfair. Shall I give him of our grub a portion?' I saw her eyes light, as with quick pleasure, but she looked long at the man and at me, and her mouth drew close and hard, and she said: 'No. The Salt Water is afar off, and Death lies in wait. Better it is that he take this stranger man and let my man Charley pass.' So the man went away in the Silence towards Pelly. That night she wept. Never had I seen her weep before. Nor was it the smoke of the fire, for the wood was dry wood. So I marvelled at her sorrow, and thought her woman's heart had grown soft at the darkness of the trail and the pain.

"Life is a strange thing. Why this longing for life? It is a game which no man wins. It is hard to live. In pain the babe sucks his first breath, in pain the old man gasps his last, yet he goes down to the open arms of Death, stumbling, falling, with head turned backward, fighting to the last. And Death is kind. It is only Life, and the things of Life that hurt. Yet we love Life, and we hate Death. It is very strange.

"We spoke little, Passuk and I, in the days which came. In the night we lay in the snow like dead people, and in the morning we went on our way, walking like dead people. And all things were dead. There were no ptarmigan, no squirrels, no snowshoe rabbits—nothing. And there was no heat, no sound, only the bitter cold and the silence. As I say, we walked like dead people, as in a dream, and we kept no count of time.

"Our last grub went, and we had shared fair, Passuk and I, but she fell more often, and at Caribou Crossing her strength left her. And in the morning we lay beneath the one robe and did not take the trail. It was in my mind to stay there and meet Death hand-in-hand with Passuk, for I had grown old, and had learned the love of woman. Also, it was eighty miles to Haines Mission, and the great Chilcoot, far above the timber-line, reared his storm-swept head between. But Passuk spoke to me.

"And she said: 'You are my man, Charley, and I have been a good woman to you. And in all the days I have made your fire, and cooked your food, and fed your dogs, and lifted paddle or broken trail I have not complained. Nor did I say that there was more warmth in the lodge of my father, or that there was more grub on the Chilcat. When you have spoken, I have listened. When you have ordered, I have obeyed. Is it not so, Charley?'

"And I said: 'Aye, it is so.'

"And she said: 'When first you came to the Chilcat, nor looked upon me, but bought me as a man buys a dog, and took me away, my heart was hard against you, and filled with bitterness and fear. But that was long ago. For you were kind to me, Charley, as a good man is kind to his dog. Your heart was cold, and there was no room for me; yet you dealt me fair and your ways were just. And I was with you when you did bold deeds and led great ventures, and I measured you against the men of other breeds, and I saw you stood among them full of honour, and your word was wise, your tongue true. And I grew proud of you, till it came that you filled all my heart, and all my thought was of you.

You were as the midsummer sun when its golden trail runs in a circle and never leaves the sky. And whatever way I cast my eyes I beheld the sun. But your heart was ever cold, and there was no room.'

" And I said : ' It is so. It was cold, and there was no room. But that is past. Now my heart is like the snowfall in the spring, when the sun has come back. There is a great thaw and a bending, a sound of running waters, and a budding and sprouting of green things. And there is drumming of partridges, and songs of robins, and great music, for the winter is broken, Passuk, and I have learned the love of woman.'

" She smiled and moved for me to draw her closer. And she said, ' I am glad.' After that she lay quiet for a long time, breathing softly, her head upon my breast. Then she whispered : ' The trail ends here, and I am tired. But first I would speak of other things. In the long ago, when I was a girl on the Chilcat, I played alone among the skin bales of my father's lodge ; for the men were away on the hunt, and the women and boys were dragging in the meat. It was in the spring, and I was alone. A great brown bear, just awake from his winter's sleep, hungry, his fur hanging to the bones in flaps of leanness, showed his head within the lodge and said " Oof ! " My brother came running back with the first sled of meat. And he fought the bear with burning sticks from the fire, and the dogs in their harness, with the sled behind them, fell upon the bear. There was a great battle and much noise. They rolled in the fire, the skin bales were scattered, the lodge was overthrown. But in the end the bear lay dead, with the fingers of my brother in his mouth and the marks of his claws upon my brother's face. Did you mark the Indian by the Pelly trail, his mitten which had no thumb, his hand which he warmed by our fire ? He was my brother. And I said he should have no grub. And he went away in the Silence without grub.'

" This, my brothers, was the love of Psasuk, who died in the snow, by the Caribou Crossing. It was a mighty love, for she denied her brother for the man who led her away on weary trails to a bitter end. And, further, such was that woman's love, she denied herself. Ere her eyes closed for the last time she took my hand and slipped it under her squirrel-skin parka to her waist. I felt there a well-filled pouch, and learned the secret of her lost strength. Day by day we had shared fair, to the last least bit ; and day by day but half her share had she eaten. The other half had gone into the well-filled pouch.

" And she said : ' This is the end of the trail for Passuk ; but your trail, Charley, leads on and on, over the great Chilcoot, down to Haines Mission and the sea. And it leads on and on, by the light of many suns, over unknown lands and strange waters, and it is full of years and honours and great glories. It leads you to the lodges of many women, and good women, but never to a greater love than the love of Passuk.'

" And I knew the woman spoke true. But a madness came upon me, and I threw the well-filled pouch from me, and swore that my trail had reached an end, till her tired eyes grew soft with tears, and she said : ' Among men has Sitka Charley walked in honour, and ever has his word been true. Does he forget that honour now and talk vain words by the Caribou Crossing ? Does he remember no more the men of Forty Mile who gave him of their grub the best, of their dogs the pick ? Ever has Passuk been proud of her man. Let him lift himself up, gird on his snowshoes and begone, that she may still keep her pride.'

" And when she grew cold in my arms I arose and sought out the well-filled pouch, and girt on my snowshoes, and staggered along the trail ; for there was a weakness in my knees, and my head was dizzy, and in my ears there was a roaring, and a flashing of fire upon my eyes. The forgotten trails of boyhood came back to me. I sat by the full pots of the potlach feast and raised my voice in song, and danced to the chanting of the men and maidens and the booming of the walrus drums.

" And Passuk held my hand and walked by my side. When I lay down to sleep she waked me. When I stumbled and fell she raised me. When I wandered in the deep snow she led me back to the trail. And in this wise, like a man bereft of reason, who sees strange visions and whose thoughts are light with wine, I came to Haines Mission by the sea."

Sitka Charley threw back the tent-flaps. It was midday. To the south, just clearing the bleak Henderson Divide, poised the cold disc of the sun. On either hand the sun-dogs blazed. The air was a gossamer of glittering frost.

Sullivan's Bargain

There is more in this humorous deal than meets the eye

By B. M. CROKER

"SO I hear as yer father's afther selling the ould ass," said Mrs. Flynn to Judy Sullivan, as they toiled uphill together, from their mutual well.

"I'm not sure about selling him, Mrs. Flynn dear," rejoined Judy with a grin of deprecation; "'twas more like swopping, I take it."

"An' how was that, acushla?"

"Ye see, me father has had it on his mind to get shut of Jerry this good while back; he was gettin' a bit stiff, and he thought av he waited too long, he'd be getting too ould entirely."

"Oh, faix, he was ould enough to be valuable," rejoined Mrs. Flynn with a derisive laugh. "Isn't he the wan age, as yer brother Matt—as is in Ameriky—and that will bring him in for five-and-twenty year, though he is not on the parish register. Well I mind the two! a grey foal, and a fat lump av a baby, when I come to Thady's Corner, a young slip av a girl meself."

Mrs. Flynn was now a stout, elderly woman, with a pair of somewhat rollicking brown eyes, and a brimming tin can in either hand, whilst her companion was "a slip of a girl," dressed in a washed-out lilac cotton, with curly red hair and a freckled face, who carried with anxious care a brown teapot and a black kettle.

The pair were celebrities in their humble way—the matron for her long tongue, and the maiden for her light foot. They lived almost next door to one another, in a cluster of cabins, too insignificant to claim the title of village, and known by the name of "Thady's Corner," although there was no corner to be seen; on the contrary, the little gathering was boldly perched on the side of a bare hill, about five miles from Killarney.

"And what sort of a dale did yer father make out over the baste?" resumed Mrs. Flynn.

"Oh, dale, indeed! 'Twas a travelling tinker as came round one day last week when the old Jerry was bet up with turf drawing, and had scarcely a leg under him, and the thief had such a slutherin way wid him, he persuaded me father that the ass was just dying on his feet, and he offered to take him away to bury him, so that he mightn't have the annoyance of seeing him in the death-grip! However, me father was not so soft as all *that*, and after the divil's own haranguing and bargaining, the tinker giv' two shillings in money, a toasting fork, and a terrible big skillet—the biggest pot I ever laid eyes on."

"Well, to be sure, 'twas no great price, and yer at the loss of the ass."

"Faix, we are so, an' miss him at every hand's turn. Me father spent the money on porther, and me mother is raging mad to find her elegant big pot was just an ould wan patched up, and has a hole in it the size of a caubeen. Sure, 'tis no manner av use at all, at all. We have just stuck it in the gap in the garden to keep the pig out, and it does that, as well as anything else, an' the villain of a tinker went and tuk a couple av the best hins away wid him, by way av keeping the ass company."

"The blaggard!" ejaculated Mrs. Flynn, now setting down her two cans, and placing her hands on her capacious hips. "Them tinkers is shocking thieves, they would stale the cross off an ass's back, and whatsomever they mend just melts in yer hand! I'm terrible sorry for ye. Would ye know the chap agin?"

"Me father says he'd swear to him in Jerusalem. He had a patch over wan eye, and a black and white waistcoat."

"Well, I'd a wish fer ould Jerry—there is not a funeral or a wedding, nor a wake, in these parts, he hasn't had a hand in. Manny and manny a lift he giv' me; bedad, he was as souple as the best in it, and when he had a mind, he would rattle a car as well as any ass going the road."

"Maybe the next wan will do as well,

Mrs. Flynn dear," rejoined Judy with smiling complacency.

" The next wan, do yer say ! Begorra ! the price of a cracked skillet won't go far in buying a good baste."

" Sure, didn't me father have an order from Matt, ere yesterday, fer four pounds ! I expect Matt would be vexed if he heard about old Jerry, seeing they was reared together, and wor companions as I may say. We wor laying to buy a sow, but, afther all, ye see we *have* the cart and tackling, and so me father is going to buy a fine young donkey or maybe a jennet, at the fair at Kilorglen."

" Is that so ? " returned Mrs. Flynn, drawing in her double chin and eyeing the girl gravely. " Still, I'm thinking ye will be lost widout Jerry ; he was a grand wan to draw turf or hay, or go to chapel, and market. He knew every turn in the road, and who will bring yer dada safe beck on fair days, avick ? Sure, they had only to stretch him on the car, and Jerry just tuk him home same as a Christian, and maybe betther, for he was a wather drinker. Where's the young wan will do that ? He was terribly exparianced, ye see," warming with her theme, " and no expense whativer, but kep' himself. It isn't every ass would ate turf, and whins, and sticks, aye, and I've seen him breaking his fast on a newspaper before now ! I'm thinking a young wan will be twice as impident ! Howsomever, I can't be wasting me whole day discoursin' of an ass, though he *was* the only one in Thady's Corner."

And, taking up her shimmering cans, Mrs. Flynn pursued her way with an air of dogged resolution, until she happened to encounter another matron *en route* to the well, and again felt called upon to halt—though Judy, with the fear of her mother before her eyes, hurried on, with a civil good-evening.

" Did ye hear of Sullivan swopping away old Jerry for a cracked skillet ? " inquired Mrs. Flynn of her acquaintance.

" Troth, an' I did so," replied Mrs. Macan with a superior smile.

" And as Matt has sent four pounds from Ameriky in a letter ? "

" I did ; I saw the money-order with me own two eyes."

" They are talking of buying a jennet, no less, at Kilorglen fair," continued Mrs. Flynn, with a touch of contempt.

Mrs. Macan smiled again.

" How grand we are ! There'll be no holding Judy, nor the mother."

" Augh ! Sure, don't ye know very well as Micky will drink half the jennet long afore *that ?* "

" That's true, an' so he will," agreed the other solemnly.

And the prospect of this amazing feat had the immediate effect of raising their spirits, dispersing a great cloud of envy and malice, and throwing the two fat gossips into a simultaneous roar of laughter.

¶

NEVERTHELESS, Mrs. Flynn was wrong for once. Mrs. Sullivan had kept the money in a place of safety—in fact, an old teacup in the thatch ; and the four one-pound notes were intact when the morning of the fair day dawned. Dawn found Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan already *en route* to the " Puck " fair. They set off at two o'clock in the highest spirits, Mrs. Sullivan wearing an ancestral blue cape cloak, a good green stuff gown, and a yellow handkerchief tied over her head ; Micky important in his Sunday suit. They had borrowed a neighbour's pony, and yoked him to their own cart. The pony was for sale, and their prospective purchase was to bring them home.

The way was long, the pony was old, and the fair was already in full swing when the eager couple arrived. Micky immediately treated himself to a glass of whisky and porter ; and, uplifted by the beverage, and the delightful sensation of having unspent money in his pocket, he drifted off into the horse park as happy as a king.

There he encountered various acquaintances, and rambled about, passing his opinion on animals with immense gravity ; sharply criticizing shapes and breeding, leaping and action, precisely as if he were a wealthy Dublin dealer come to collect hunters for " the show," instead of a poor labouring man, with the price of an ass in his pocket.

He talked big, he swaggered here, and he swaggered there, with his hands clasped under his coat-tails, and a straw in his mouth.

He priced a broken-down thoroughbred in an off-hand lordly manner, wrenched open the jaws of an indignant polo pony, and glared into her mouth. He surveyed an upstanding young hunter with a severely suspicious eye, and passed disparaging remarks upon his ribs, and his ancestors.

" Begorra, 'tis you as knows a good horse when ye see him," exclaimed one of Micky's companions.

" Faix, I'd rather take Micky Sullivan's opinion of a colt than Tim Maher's, any day," announced another.

" Augh, Tim Maher ! " protested a third with lofty scorn. " What does *he* know of the grass of a goose ? "

" Anyhow, he's a terrible stern hand at a bargain. I've known him drive a colt home fourteen mile, all on account av half-a-crown as was between him and a Tralee dealer."

Meanwhile Micky and his satellites strolled through the fair, and still no animal found favour in his eyes.

The day was sultry, and when the party drew near " The Three Shamrocks," Micky cordially exhorted his acquaintances to " come in, and let him see if any of them had a mouth on him." Which invitation was, needless to say, accepted with effusion.

Meanwhile Mrs. Sullivan was also enjoying herself prodigiously among the matrons of her acquaintance. It was the essence of a whole London season compressed into a few hours. She talked over " matches," the shocking price of butter, and the terrible fall in pigs ; she accepted a cup of tea from one friend, and a glass of sherry wine from another (leaving, according to polite custom, a certain portion in the glass), she made several cautious purchases, and, at five o'clock, set out in search of Micky.

She soon discovered him in his glory, the centre of a smiling crowd ; he was bargaining with a bearded stranger for a somewhat dilapidated animal, cast from the Kenmare hearse.

" Is it a *harse* as yer losin' your time over, Micky ? " she expostulated in her shrillest key. " An' what would we do with a great black baste like that, as would neither fit in the car, nor the byre, and would just ate us out av house and home ? "

" Oh, he's a fine baste, and barrin' a couple av splints and a back sinew, has a power av work in him yet," rejoined Micky. " Sure, won't I hire him out for ploughing, and in the saison he can carry the ladies through the ' Gap,' an' always great show for the money."

" Ah, show yourself ! don't be going on wid yer blathering and nonsense ; it's an ass we came to buy, and not a big elephant like that. The fair is thinnin', old Tim has got shut av his pony, so ye best to buy something to take us home ; I'll be no party to harse-dealing, and hiring out, and when ye have the right *size* of baste, ye will find me and the cart at Mrs. Flood's," and with an angry toss of her yellow head, and a whisk of her blue cloak, Mrs. Sullivan fell back into the crowd, leaving a very favourable impression upon the women folk, although one bold bachelor called out : " What do ye want with the ould hearse horse at all, Micky, or any horse whatever, when ye have such an elegant grey mare av yer own ?"

An hour later Micky arrived at Flood's jubilant and talkative, followed by two men leading a smart-looking brown ass.

" Here ye are, Bridget," he screeched, " been and bought the gayest little donkey in Munster."

" An' time for ye," rejoined his better half. " Sure, every wan is going. How much ? "

" Three pounds five shillings. I bet them down from five pounds, and they were axing five pounds ten."

" Oh, axin' is one thing, and *gettin'* another. How old is he ? "

" He's four off, marm," replied his former owner, a decent-looking man in frieze, " and he is well used to a family, and I know he will giv' ye every satisfaction ; ye have only to spake to him, and, whoop ! away he goes. Faix, I'll go bail that within the week ye will be looking on him as an ould friend."

In ten minutes' time, Neddy was in the shafts, and Micky Sullivan having taken a potent stirrup-cup, relinquished the rope reins to his consort, who was a donkey driver of no mean skill—there was no stronger wrist to chuck a mouth, no keener eye for a vulnerable place in an animal's hide than hers, in the whole barony.

However, the new purchase required neither prodding nor other modes of persuasion ; but took the road in gallant style, leaving a considerable circle of admirers round the door of " The Three Shamrocks." He travelled well, and at twelve o'clock at night brought his new owners safe and sound to the door of their own crooked cabin.

Judy, hearing the wheels, ran out with a candle in her hand to welcome her parents and their purchase ; and by the light of her dip accorded the warmest admiration to the latter. Finally she unyoked him and turned him loose to look for his supper—after the manner of old Jerry.

The following morning by nine o'clock

the neighbours had assembled in great force to inspect the new ass—in fact the only ass that Thady's Corner could boast. He was passed by a committee of seventeen —men, women and children—as a " nice shapely little baste, of a fine colour, and as well shod as if he wer' a racer."

" None of the crumpled claw hoofs of ould Jerry, and wid a beautiful docked forelock, and eye of his own in his head." The new purchase was suffered to rest, and to remain on view, for the space of that day, whilst Bridget and Mick—who had scarcely recovered from the delightful excitement of the fair—regaled their hearers with items of intelligence, news of distant friends, and what " I said " and " he said " and " she said " and " they said " ; and " how Micky was in two minds to buy a coach horse, but that Bridget had put him out of consate wid him, forby making a holy show of Micky himself before half the boys. She was bent on an ass, an' an ass she'd have, and it had ended in her having her say, and in bringing home the grandest little baste in the fair, as they could all see wid their own two eyes."

¶

EARLY the next morning Micky Sullivan yoked his new investment to the car, and set off briskly to the bog in order to cut turf. The sultry forenoon gradually developed into a thick grey mist, and finally into an angry downpour. At first Micky and Thady Flynn, being Kerry men, paid no attention to the elements, but at length they were both compelled to shelter at the lee side of a turf clamp, where, with a sack over his shoulders, and a dhudeen in his mouth, Micky made the best of circumstances. He and Flynn discussed the fair, the fishing, the potato spray, the last Land Act, and the prospects of Cork Park races.

" An' talking of racing, Micky, I suppose there's no chance of your young two-year-old taking the road of his own accord ? " asked Flynn rather anxiously.

" Not at all ! In the first place, I have him tethered with a bit av a suggawn ; besides, he has as much sense as an old man."

" Well, it would be hard to bate old Jerry for cuteness, he was a great ass in his day."

" He was so, but he was getting foundered in the feet and shabby in the coat, and an eyesore to herself, so I had to get shut av him, an' I was main sorry, for Matty and him was reared together, and I always had a wish for the baste. Well, maybe we'd better be making a push for home now. The new little chap may be getting unaisy in himself standing so long in the pouring rain." And Micky, with some difficulty, got upon his legs, drew the sack over his head, and hobbled stiffly away to where he had left his yoke.

Yes, there indeed was the cart, but where was the new chap ? the gay little brown donkey ?

Micky stared in appalled silence, then pinched himself vigorously, finally turned fiercely to his companion, and shouted in a hoarse, tremulous voice :

" Now what pistrogue is this ? What old witch has been casting spells on me grand new ass ? What do you call yon baste, Thady Flynn ? "

" Faix, av I didn't know that I was sober, an' av I hadn't me sivin senses, I'd call him ould Jerry ! An' may I never, if he doesn't know his name," he added, awestruck.

" 'Tis some blaggard as has gone and robbed me," shouted Micky ; " taken off the young wan and left me with this ' old God help us.' 'Tis either that, or the fairies ? I'm thinking——"

" An' I'm thinking as it is the tinker as has been playing his little tricks on ye again. Sure, they are the greatest horse-copers in the wide warld. See how well he has pared and shod the ould one's hoofs, and filed his teeth, and fed him up, an'," with a yell of laughter, " *painted* him. But the paint wouldn't wash, ye see. Look how it has all run off av him, as if he was a threepenny calico ! " and he held up his hand, covered with a dark brown stain.

" Oh, mother av Moses ! What sort of thievery do ye call this ? " screamed Micky, now rubbing the donkey's thick wet coat with the same result.

" Begor, them tinkers is too clever to live," exclaimed Thady, with another violent outburst. " They took in a power besides yerself. Sure, not one in Thady's Corner but thought he was a new baste, and them acquainted with Jerry this twenty year ! Holy smoke ! but it's elegant a joke as I've come across this many a day."

" 'Tis fine to be you, roaring and bawling, and staggering there, but, sure, I'll be the laughing-stock of the barony, and what will herself say ? "

" Yer wouldn't," now gasping for breath

and drying his eyes on his coat sleeves, "give him another coat av paint, I suppose?" asked Thady in a choked voice, as he hitched himself up on the car.

"Augh! paint indeed! Don't be talkin' to me av paint," rejoined the other furiously, as, with a savage bang on poor Jerry's hide, he rattled away homewards.

At first he turned a deaf ear to all his companion's sympathy, blandishments, and affectionate efforts at consolation; the only thing that could afford him the smallest relief was the tinker's blood.

"Now, take it aisy, Micky, me darlin'," urged his counsellor, as they began to breast the last hill; "ye had a good ass yesterday, ye have the same animal to-day. Sure, ye never half valued him afore; with clever shoeing, and a few odd locks of hay, ye won't know him for ould Jerry, and when the laugh is raised against you, take my advice and laugh too, and that will soon stop them."

Mrs. Sullivan, when her first shrieks of horror and amazement had subsided, received the news with astonishing fortitude.

"Faix, I misdoubted *something* was not right, when he turned the chapel corner so clivir," she said in a voice of tragic calm, "but, at the worst, I thought he was a fairy."

"An' I thought it mighty quare, when he made straight for the pig's tub the moment he was out of the shafts," added Judy, "but I never suspicioned it was Jerry himself. Oh! but those tinkers would bate the divil."

Before night, the news of the manner of Jerry's return had penetrated into every cabin within a radius of two miles, and Micky Sullivan took Thady Flynn's hint, and received the grinning condolences of his friends with the aplomb of a man of the world, made quite the best of the situation, and laughed till, as he subsequently expressed it, "he hadn't an eye in his head," and dwelt persistently upon the fact that "*he* was no worse took in than the whole 'Corner,' no—nor half the fair!"

The Flynns and Connors, who had been secretly envious of the splendid brown trotting ass, were now both relieved and good-humoured.

"Begor, I always said as ould Jerry come of a grand stock, was a great fellow, and had a power of work in him," proclaimed Mrs. Flynn in her loudest key.

"Ye did so," acquiesced Micky, "and knows a good baste when ye see him, not like me, as couldn't keep a valuable article when I had it, till it was, so to speak, forced on me again. An' Matt will be terrible proud to know as we have the old playfellow still."

"But what will Matt be after saying to ye, Mick, when he hears how ye spent the good four pounds he sent home? What will he say when he hears that ye went and laid it out in buying yer own ould ass?" demanded a malicious female voice.

But to this question, Micky Sullivan, the inventive and ready in retort, could find no fitting reply.

The Love of Nature

THE love of Nature is ever returned double to us, not only the delighter in our delight, but by linking our sweetest, but of themselves perishable feelings to distinct and vivid images, which we ourselves, at times, and which a thousand casual recollections, recall to our memory. She is the preserver, the treasurer of our joys. Even in sickness and nervous diseases, she has peopled our imagination with lovely forms which have sometimes overpowered the inward pain and brought with them their old sensations.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

North of the Tropic of Capricorn

East is East and West is West—

By A. E. W. MASON

THE strong civic spirit of the Midlands makes them fertile in reformers; and Mr. Endicott even in his early youth was plagued by the divine discontent with things as they are. Neither a happy marriage, nor a prosperous business, nor an engaging daughter appeased him. But he was slow in discovering a remedy. The absence of any sense of humour blunted his wits and he lived in a vague distress, out of which it needed the death of his wife to quicken him. "Some result must come out of all these years of pondering and discomfort, if only as a memorial to her," he reflected, and he burrowed again amongst the innumerable panaceas. Then at last he found it—on an afternoon walk in June when the sharp contrast between the grime of the town and the loveliness of green and leaf which embowered it so closely, smote upon him almost with pain. The Minimum Wage. Like Childe Roland's Dark Tower, it had lain within his vision for many a long mile of his pilgrimage. His eyes had rested on it and had never taken it in; so simple and clear it was to the view.

Thereafter he was quick to act. Time was running on. He was forty-two. He disposed of his business, and a year later was elected to Parliament. Once in the House he walked warily. He had no personal ambition, but he was always afraid lest some indiscretion should set the House against him and delay his cause. Mr. Endicott had his plan quite clear in his mind. Samuel Plimsoll was his model. The great Bill for the establishment of the Minimum Wage should be a private member's Bill moved from the back benches, session after session if need be, and driven through Parliament into Law at last by the sheer weight of its public value.

Accordingly for a year he felt his way, learning the rules and orders, speaking now and then without subservience and without impertinence; and after the prorogation of the House for the summer, he took his daughter with him to a farm-house set apart in a dale of Cumberland. In that solitary place, inspired by the brown fells and the tumbling streams, and with the one person he loved as his companion, he proposed finally to smooth and round his Bill.

Accident or destiny, however—whichever you like to call the beginning of tragic things—put an Australian in the same compartment of the railway carriage; and the Australian was led to converse by the sight of various cameras on the luggage rack.

"My father is very fond of photography," said Elsie Endicott. "It amuses him, and the pictures which he takes, if the day is clear, are sometimes quite recognizable."

"My dear!" said Mr. Endicott.

Elsie turned to the window and shook hands with two young men who had come to see her off. One of them, whom Mr. Endicott vaguely remembered to have seen at meals in his house, climbed on the footboard.

"You will take care of Miss Endicott, sir," he said firmly. "She has been overdoin' it a bit, dancin', you know, and that sort of thing, while you were at the House of Commons."

Mr. Endicott chuckled.

"I'll tell you something about my daughter," he replied. "She may look like china, but she is pretty solid earthenware really. And if there are any others as anxious about her as you are you might spread the good news."

The train moved off. "So you are in the House of Commons," said the Australian, and he began to talk. "Our great trouble—yours and mine—is——"

"I know it," Mr. Endicott interrupted with a smile of confidence.

"Of course you do," replied the Australian. "It's the overcrowding of the East under the protective rule of the British."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Endicott blankly.

"We could help a good deal," the Australian continued, "if only our Government had got a ha'porth of common sense. North of the Tropic of Capricorn, there's land and to spare which coloured labour could cultivate and white labour can't."

This was strange talk to Mr. Endicott. He was aware but not conscious of great dominions and possessions outside the British Islands. He had indeed avoided the whole subject. He was shy of the phrase which described them, as a horse is shy of a newspaper blown about the street. The British Empire! The very words had a post-prandial sound. Instead of suggesting to him vast territories with myriads of men and women groping amongst enormous problems, they evoked a picture of a flamboyant gentleman in evening dress standing at the head of a table, his face congested with too much dinner, a glass of wine in his one hand, a fat cigar in the other, and talking vauntingly. This particular sentence of the Australian stuck inconveniently in his mind and smouldered there.

For instance. On the afternoon of their arrival Elsie was arranging his developing dishes and his chemicals on a small rough table in a corner of their one living-room. She put an old basket-chair by the table and set around it a screen which she had discovered in one of the bedrooms upstairs.

"There!" she said. "You can make all your messes here, father, and we can keep the room looking habitable, and I shan't get all my frocks stained."

"Very well, Elsie," said her father absently, and he spoke his own thoughts. "That was a curious fear of the man in the train, Elsie. I think there's no truth in it. No, the danger's here in this country; here's what's to be done to avert it," and he slapped his hand down upon his pile of statistics.

"No doubt, father," said Elsie, and she went on with her work.

The very next evening he returned again to the subject. It was after dinner and about half-past nine o'clock. The blinds had not been lowered and Endicott looked out through the open windows on to a great flank of Scawfell which lay drenched in white moonlight a couple of fields away.

"North of the Tropic of Capricorn," he said; "I wish we had an atlas, Elsie."

"I'll write to London and buy one," said the girl. "We haven't got more than a 'Handy Gazetteer' even at home. It'll be amusing to plan out some long journeys which we can take together when you have passed your Bill into law."

Endicott smiled grimly at his daughter.

"I reckon we won't take many journeys together, Elsie. Oh, you needn't look surprised and hurt! I am not taken in by you a bit, my dear. That young spark on the footboard who told me I didn't take enough care of you"—and Elsie gurgled with laughter at the recollection—"threw a dreadful light upon your character and gave me a clue besides to the riddle of your vast correspondence. I hope you are telling them all that my persistent unkindness is not driving you into a decline."

Elsie paused in the act of addressing an envelope—there was a growing pile of letters in front of her—to reassure her father.

"I tell them all," she replied, "that you neither beat me nor starve me, and that if you weren't so very messy with your chemicals in the corner over there, I should have very little reason to change my home."

"Thank you, my dear," said Mr. Endicott. He was very proud of his daughter and especially of her health. With her dark rebellious hair, the delicate colour in her cheeks, and her starry eyes, she had a quite delusive look of fragility. But she could dance any youth of her acquaintance to a standstill without ruffling her curls, as he very well knew. He gazed at her lowered head with a smile.

"However, all this doesn't help me with the Minimum Wage," he continued, and he turned again to the papers on his desk by the window, while Elsie at the table in the middle of the big low-roofed room continued to write her letters.

They were still engaged in these pursuits when Mrs. Tyson, their landlady, came into the room to lower the blinds.

"No, please leave them up," said Endicott, in an irritable voice. "I'll draw them down myself before we go to bed."

Mrs. Tyson accordingly left the blinds alone.

"And you'll be careful of the Crown Derby," she said imperturbably, nodding towards a china tea-set ranged in an open cabinet near to the door. "Gentlemen from London have asked me to sell it over and over. For it's of great value. But I won't, as I promised my mother. She, poor woman——"

"Yes, yes," interposed Mr. Endicott,

" we'll be very careful. You may remember you told us all about it yesterday."

Mrs. Tyson turned down a little lower the one oil lamp which, with the candles upon Endicott's desk, lighted the room, and went back to the inner door.

" Will you be wanting anything more for a little while ? " she asked. " For my girl's away, and I must go down the valley. I am sending some sheep away to market to-morrow morning."

" No, we want nothing at all," said Elsie, without paying much attention to what the woman was saying. Mrs. Tyson was obviously inclined to fuss, and would have to be suppressed. But she went out now without another word. There were two doors to the room at opposite ends, the inner one leading to a small hall, the kitchen and the staircase, the other, and outer door, opening directly close by the window on to a tiny garden with a flagged pathway. At the end of the path there was a gate and a low garden wall. Beyond the gate a narrow lane and a brook separated the house from the fields and the great flank of fell.

The night was hot, and Endicott, unable to concentrate his attention upon his chosen theme, had the despairing sensation that he had lost grip of it altogether; his eyes wandered from his papers so continually to the hill-side asleep in the bright moonlight. Here a great boulder threw a long motionless shadow down the slope, like a house; there a sharp rock-ridge cropping out of the hill, raised against the sky a line of black pinnacles like a file of soldiers.

" I can't work to-night, Elsie, and that's the truth," cried Endicott passionately, " though this is just the night when one ought to be most alive to the millions of men cooped in hot cities and living wretchedly. I'll go out of doors. Will you come ? "

Elsie hesitated. Mr. Endicott was to carry that poignant recollection to his death. One word of persuasion and she would have come with him. But he did not speak it, and Elsie bent her head again to her work.

" No thanks, father," she said. " I'll finish these letters. They must go off to-morrow morning."

Endicott blew out his candles, lit his pipe, and took up his cap. He was still smiling over her important air as of some one with great and urgent business. He went out into the garden. Elsie heard the latch of the gate click. He walked across the little bridge over the brook and at once his mood changed. He wandered across the fields and up the hill-side, sorely discontented with himself. He had lost interest in the Minimum Wage. So much he admitted. The surroundings which were to inspire him had, on the contrary, merely provoked a disinclination to do any work whatever. The reaction after the strain of the Session was making itself felt. The question in his mind was " Why bother ? " High up the hill he sat down upon a boulder to have it out with himself.

¶

THE sound of the stream dropping from pool to pool of rock on its way down the valley rose in a continuous thunder to his ears. He looked down at the little farmhouse beneath him, and the golden light of the lamp within the windows of the sitting-room.

As he looked the light moved. Then it diminished; then it vanished altogether. Endicott chuckled and lit a second pipe, holding the lighted match in the hollow of his hands and bending his head close over it, because of a whisper of air. Elsie had finished her letters to the youths who besieged her and was off to bed. Only the moonlight blazed upon the windows now and turned them into mirrors of burnished silver.

Endicott smoked a third pipe whilst he wrestled with himself upon the hill-side. To-morrow he would get up very early, bathe in the big deep pool, transparent to the lowest of its thirty feet of water, and then spend a long morning with the wage-lists of the chain-making industry. That was settled. Nothing should change his plan. Meanwhile it was very pleasant up here under the cool sky of moonlight and faint stars.

He dragged himself up reluctantly from his seat, and went down towards the farm. There was a little stone bridge to cross over one of the many mountain streams which went to the making of the small river on the other side of the house. Then came the lane and the garden-gate. He closed the door behind him when he had gone in. Although there was no lamp burning, the room was not dark. A twilight, vaporous and silvery, crept into it, darkening towards the inner part and filling the corners with mystery; while the floor

by the window was chequered with great panels of light, precise and bright as day.

On the hill-side Endicott had seen the light go out in the room, and he crossed over to the big table for the lamp. But it was no longer there. Elsie had taken it, no doubt, into the hall with her letters for the morning post and had not brought it back. He moved to his own table where the candles stood; and with a shock he perceived that he was not alone in that unlighted room. A movement amongst the shadows by the inner door caught and held his eyes.

He swung round and faced the spot. He saw against the wall near the screen which hid his photographic paraphernalia, a man standing, straight, upright and very still. The figure was vague and blurred, but Endicott could see that his legs were clothed in white, and that he wore some bulky and outlandish gear upon his head. Endicott quickly struck a match. At the scratch and spurt of flame, the man in the shadow ran forward towards the door with extraordinary swiftness. But his shoulder caught the case in which Mrs. Tyson's Crown Derby china was standing, and brought it with a crash of broken crockery to the floor. Before the intruder could recover, Endicott set his back against the door and held the burning match above his head. He was amazed by what he saw.

The intruder was an Asiatic with the conventional hawk-nose of the Jew in the shape of his face; a brown man wearing a coloured turban upon his head, an old tweed jacket on his shoulders, and a pair of dirty white linen trousers on his legs, narrowing until they fitted closely round his ankles. He wore neither shoes nor stockings. And he stood very still watching Endicott with alert, bright eyes. Endicott, without moving from the door, reached out and lit the candles upon the table.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded curiously. He had no personal fear, and he was not much troubled by the man's hiding in the room. Elsie, whom the fellow might have frightened, had long since gone to bed, and there was nothing of value, except the Crown Derby, which he could have stolen. On the other hand, Endicott was immensely puzzled by the presence of an Asiatic at all in this inland and lonely valley far from railways and towns, at half-past ten of the night.

"I pass the house," the man answered in English which was astonishingly good. "I think you give me one piece opium to go on with."

"Opium!" cried Mr. Endicott, as if he had been stung. How many times had he voted for the suppression of everything to do with opium! "You'll find none of that abominable drug here!"

He surveyed the Asiatic, outraged in every feeling. He lifted the latch. He was on the point of flinging open the door. He had actually begun to open it, when his mood changed. North of the Tropic of Capricorn. The lilt of the words was in his ears. He remembered the talk of the Australian in the railway carriage about the overcrowding of the East. The coming of this strange brown man seemed to him of a sudden curiously relevant. He closed the door again.

"You passed the house? Where do you come from? Who are you? How do you come here?"

The Asiatic, who had stood gathered like a runner at the starting-point while the door was being opened, now cringed and smiled.

"Protector of the poor, I tell you my story"; and Mr. Endicott found himself listening in that quiet farmhouse of the Cumberland dales to a most enlightening Odyssey.

The man's name was Ahmed Ali, and he was a Pathan of the hills. His home was in the middle country between Peshawur and the borders of Afghanistan, and he belonged to a tribe of seven hundred men, every one of whom had left his home and his wife and his children behind him, and had gone down to Bombay to seek his livelihood in the stokeholds of ships. Ahmed had been taken on a steamer of the Peninsular and Oriental Line bound for Australia, where he hoped to make his fortune. But neither at Sydney nor at Melbourne had he been allowed to land.

"But I am a British citizen," he said, having acquired some English.

"Well, and what of it?" said the Port authorities.

Nevertheless the night before the boat sailed he slipped overboard and swam ashore, to be caught when the smoke of that steamer was no more than a stain on the horizon. He was held in custody and would have been returned by the next steamer to India. But there was already in the harbour a

cargo boat of the Clan Line bound for Quebec round the Cape; and the boat was short of its complement in the stoke-hold.

Ahmed Ali, accordingly, signed on, and sailed in her and acquired more English to help him on in the comfortable life he now proposed to make for himself in Canada.

"But again they would not let me go away into the country," he continued. "I told them I was British citizen, but it did not help me; no, not any more than in Australia. They put me on a ship for England, and I came to Liverpool steerage like a genelman. And at Liverpool I landed boldly. For I was a British citizen."

"Ah!" interjected Mr. Endicott proudly. "Here, in England, you see the value of being a British citizen."

"But no, my genelman. For here there's no work for British citizen. I land and I walk about and I ask for work. But everyone says, 'Why don't you stay in your own country?' So I came away across the fields, and no man give me one piece opium."

Mr. Endicott nodded his head when the story was ended.

"Well, after all, why don't you stay in your own country?" he asked.

Mr. Endicott had already had his answer from the Australian, but he was now thirsty for details, and his ears in consequence were afflicted with a brief description of British rule from the Pathan's point of view.

"The all-wise one will pardon me. You keep the peace. Therefore we cannot stay in our own country. For we grow crowded and there is no food. In old times, when we were crowded and hungry, we went down into the plains and took the land and the wives of the people of the plains and killed the men. But the *raj* does not allow it. It holds a sword between us and the plains, a sword with the edge towards us. Neither, on the other hand, does it feed us."

Mr. Endicott was aghast at the perverted views thus calmly announced to him.

"But we can't allow you to come down into India murdering and robbing and taking the wives."

The Asiatic shrugged his shoulders.

"It is the law."

Mr. Endicott was silent. If it were not the law, there were certainly a great many precedents. The men of the hills and the people of the plains—yes, history would say it *was* the law. Mr. Endicott's eyes were opening upon unknown worlds. The British Power stood in India then, cleaving a law of nature?

"Also, you send your doctors and make cures when the plague and the cholera come, so that fewer people die. Also, when the crops fail and there is famine, you distribute food, so that again fewer people die. No, there is no room now for us in our own country because of you, and you will not let us into yours."

"But we can't do anything else," cried Mr. Endicott. "We keep the peace, we feed when there is famine, we send our doctors when there is plague, because that is the law, also—the law of our race."

¶

AHMED ALI did not move. He had placed the dilemma before Endicott. He neither solved nor accepted it. Nor was Endicott able to find any answer. There must be one; since his whole race was arraigned just for what it most prided itself upon—oh, no doubt there was an answer. But Mr. Endicott could not find it. His imagination, however, grasped the problem. He saw those seven hundred tribesmen travelling down the passes to the rail head, loading the Bombay train and dispersing upon the steamers. But he had no answer, and because he had no answer he was extremely uncomfortable. He had lived for a year in the world of politicians where, as a rule, there are answers all ready made for any question, answers neatly framed in aphorisms and propositions and provided for our acceptance by thoughtful organizations. But he could not remember one to suit this occasion. He was at a loss, and he took the easy way to rid himself of discomfort. He dived into his trouser-pocket and fished out a handful of silver.

"Here!" he said. "This'll help you on a bit. Now go!"

He stood aside from the door and the Asiatic darted to it with an extraordinary eagerness. But once he had unlatched it, once it stood open to the hill-side and the sky, and he free in the embrasure, he lost all his cringing aspect. He turned round upon Mr. Endicott.

"I go now," he cried in a high arrogant voice. "But I shall come back very soon, and all our peoples will come with me, all our hungry peoples from the East. Re-

member that, you genelman!" And then he ran noiselessly out of the house and down the pathway to the gate.

He ran with extraordinary swiftness; so that Endicott followed him to the gate and watched him go. He flew down the road, his shadow flitting in the moonlight like a bird. Once he looked over his shoulder, and seeing Endicott at the gate he leapt into the air. A few yards farther he doubled on his steps, climbed down into the little stream beside the lane and took to the hills. And in another moment he was not. The broad and kindly fell took him to its bosom. He was too tiny an atom to stand out against that great towering slope of grass and stones. Indeed, he vanished so instantly that it seemed he must have dived into a cave. The next moment Endicott almost doubted whether he had ever been at all, whether he was not some apparition born of his own troubled brain and the Australian's talk. But, as he turned back into the house, he saw upon the flags of the garden path the marks of the man's wet, bare feet. Not only had Ahmed Ali been to the farm-house, but he had crossed the stream to get there.

Mr. Endicott went back to his table in the window and seated himself in front of his lighted candles, more from habit than with any thought of work. He felt suddenly rather tired. He had not been conscious of any fear while Ahmed Ali was in the room, or indeed of any strain. But strain, and perhaps fear, there had been. Certainly a vague fear began to get hold of him now. He had a picture before his eyes of the Asiatic leaping into the air upon the road, and then doubling for the hills. Why had he fled so fast?

"North of the Tropic of Capricorn!"

He repeated the words to himself aloud. Was the Australian right after all? And would they come from the East—those hungry people? Mr. Endicott seemed to feel the earth tremble beneath the feet of the myriads of Asia. He bent his ear and seemed to hear the distant confusion of their approach. He looked down at his papers and flicked them contemptuously. Of what use would be his fine Bill for the establishment of a Minimum Wage? Why, everything would go down—civilization, the treasures of art, twenty centuries of man's painful growth—just as that Derby china teapot with its wonderful colour of dark blue and red and gold. The broken fragments of the teapot became a symbol to Endicott.

"And the women would go down too," he thought with a shiver. "They would take the wives."

He had come to this point in his speculations when the inner door opened, and the light broadened in the room. He heard Mrs. Tyson shuffle in, but he did not turn towards her. He sat looking out upon the fell.

"I found the lamp burning on the hall table by the letters, sir," she said, "and I thought you might want it."

"Thank you," said Endicott vaguely, and he was roused by a little gasping cry which she uttered.

"Oh, yes! I am very sorry, Mrs. Tyson. Your teapot has been knocked down. I went out. There was a man in the room when I came back. He knocked it down. Of course I'll make its value good, though I doubt if I can replace it."

Mrs. Tyson made no answer. She placed the lamp on the table. Endicott was still seated at his table in the window with his back to the room. But he had thrown back his head, and he saw the circle of reflected light upon the ceiling shake and quiver as Mrs. Tyson put the lamp down. The glass chimney, too, rattled as though her hands were shaking.

"I am very sorry indeed," he continued.

Mrs. Tyson dropped upon her knees and began to pick up the broken pieces from the floor.

"It doesn't matter at all, sir," she said, and Endicott was surprised by the utter tonelessness of her voice. He knew that she set great store upon this set of china; she had boasted of it. Yet now that it was spoilt she spoke of it with complete indifference. He turned round in his chair and watched her picking up the fragments—watched her idly until she sobbed.

"Good heavens," he cried, "I knew that you valued it, Mrs. Tyson, but——" and then he stopped. For she turned to him and he knew that there was more than the china teapot at the bottom of her trouble. Her face, white and shaking and wet with tears, was terrible to see. There was a horror upon it as though she had beheld things not allowed, and a hopeless pain in her eyes as though she was sure that the appalling vision would never pass. But all she did was to repeat her phrase.

"It doesn't matter at all, sir."

Endicott started up and laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"What has happened, Mrs. Tyson?"

"Oh, I can't tell you, sir." She knelt upon the floor and covered her face with her hands and wept as Endicott had never dreamed that a human being could weep. Fear seized upon him and held him till he shivered with the chill of it. The woman had come in by the inner door. In the hall, then, was to be found the cause of her horror. He lifted the lamp and hurried towards it, but to reach the door he had to pass the screen which Elsie had arranged on the day of their coming. And at the screen he stopped. The terror which may come to a man once in his life clutched his heart so that he choked. For behind the screen he saw the gleam of a girl's white frock.

"Elsie," he cried, "you have been all this while here—asleep." For he would not believe the thing he knew.

She was lying rather than sitting in the low basket chair in front of the little table on which the chemicals were ranged, with her back towards him, and her face buried in the padding of the chair. Endicott stretched his arm over her and set down the lamp upon the table. Then he spoke to her again chidingly and shaking her arm.

"Elsie, wake up! Don't be ridiculous!"

He slipped an arm under her waist, and lifting her, turned her towards him. The girl's head rolled upon her shoulders, and there was a look of such deadly horror upon her face that no pen could begin to describe it. Endicott caught her to his breast.

"Oh, my God!" he cried hoarsely. "My poor girl! My poor girl!"

Mrs. Tyson had come up behind him.

"It was he," she whispered, "the man who was here. He killed her!" And as Endicott turned his head towards the woman some little thing slipped from the chair on to the floor with a tiny rattle. Endicott laid her down and picked up a small, yellow, round tablet.

"No, he didn't," he said with a queer eagerness in his voice. The tablet came from a small bottle on the table at the end of his row of chemicals. It was labelled, "Intensifier" and "Poison," and the cork was out of the bottle. The bottle had been full that afternoon. There was more than one tablet missing now.

"No, she killed herself. Those tablets are cyanide of potassium. He never touched her. Look!"

Upon the boards of the floor the wet and muddy feet of the Asiatic had written the history of his movements beyond the possibility of mistake. Here he had stood in front of her—not a step nearer. Mrs. Tyson heard him whisper in his daughter's ear. "Oh, my dear, I thank God!" He sank upon his knees beside her. Mrs. Tyson went out, and, closing the door gently, left him with his dead.

She sat and waited in the kitchen, and after a while she heard him moving. He opened the door into the hall and came out and went slowly and heavily up the stairs into Elsie's room. In a little while he came down again and pushed open the kitchen door. He had aged by twenty years, but his face and his voice were calm.

"You found the lamp in the hall?" he said, in a low voice. "Beside the letters? Come! We must understand this. My mind will go unless I am quite sure."

She followed him into the living-room and saw that his dead daughter was no longer there. She stood aside whilst, with a patience which wrung her heart, Endicott worked out, by the footprints of the intruder and this and that sure sign, the events of those tragic minutes, until there was no doubt left.

"Elsie wrote eight letters," he said. "Seven are in the hall. Here is the eighth, addressed and stamped upon the table where she wrote."

¶

THE letters had to be sent down the valley to the inn early in the morning. So when she had finished, she had carried them into the hall—all of them, she thought—and she had taken the lamp to light her steps. Whilst she was in the hall, and whilst all this side of the house was in darkness, Ahmed Ali had slipped into the room from the lane by the brook. There were the marks of his feet coming from the door.

"But was that possible?" Endicott argued. "I was on the hill-side, the moon shining from behind my shoulders on to the house. There were no shadows. It was all as clear as day. I must have seen the man come along the little footpath to the door, for I was watching the house. I saw the light in this room disappear. Wait a moment! Yes. Just after the light went out I struck a match and lit my pipe."

He had held the match close to his face in the hollow of his hands, and had carefully

lit the pipe ; and after the match had burned out, the glare had remained for a few seconds in his eyes. It was during those seconds that the Asiatic had crossed the lane and darted in by the door.

The next step then became clear. Elsie, counting her letters in the hall, had discovered that she had left one behind. She knew where she had left it. She knew that the moonlight was pouring into the room ; and, leaving the lamp in the hall, she had returned to fetch it. In the moonlit room she had come face to face with the Asiatic.

He had been close to the screen when she met him, and there he had stood. No doubt he had begun by asking her for opium. No doubt, too—perhaps through some unanswered cry of hers, perhaps because she never cried out at all, perhaps on account of a tense attitude of terror not to be mistaken even in that vaporous silvery light—somehow, at all events, he had become aware that she was alone in the house ; and his words and his demands had changed. She had backed away from him against the wall, moving the screen and the chair, and upsetting a book upon the table there. That was evident from the disorder in this corner. Upon the table stood Endicott's chemicals for developing his photographs. Endicott saw the picture with a ghastly distinctness—her hand dropping for support upon the table and touching the bottles which she had arranged herself.

" Yes, she knew that that one nearest, the first she touched, was the poison, and meant —what ? Safety ! It's awful, but it's the truth. Very probably she screamed, poor girl. But there was no one to hear her."

The noise of the river leaping from rock pool to rock pool had drowned any sound of it which might else have reached to Endicott's ears. The scream had failed. In front of her was a wild and desperate Pathan from the stokehold of a liner. Under her hand was the cyanide of potassium. Endicott could see her furtively moving the cork from the mouth of the bottle with the fingers of one hand, whilst she stood watching in horror the man smiling at her in silence.

" Don't you feel that that is just how everything happened ? Aren't you sure of it ? " he asked, turning to Mrs. Tyson with a dreadful appeal in his eyes. But she could answer it honestly.

" Yes, sir, that is how it all happened," and for a moment Mr. Endicott was comforted. But immediately afterwards he sat down on a chair like a tired man and his fingers played upon the table.

" It would all be over in a few seconds," he said lamentably to Mrs. Tyson. " But, oh, those seconds ! They would have been terrible—terrible with pain." His voice trailed away into silence. He sat still staring at the table. Then he raised his head towards Mrs. Tyson, and his face was disfigured by a smile of torment. " Hard luck on a young girl, eh, Mrs. Tyson ? " and the very banality of the sentence made it poignant. " Everything just beginning for her—the sheer fun of life. Her beauty, and young men, and friends and dancing, the whole day a burst of music—and then suddenly—quite alone—that's so horrible—quite alone, in a minute she had to——" His voice choked and the tears began to run down his face.

" But the man ? " Mrs. Tyson ventured.

" Oh, the man ! " cried Endicott. " I will think of him to-morrow."

He went up the stairs walking as heavily as when he had carried his daughter in his arms ; and he went again into Elsie's room. Mrs. Tyson blew out the candles upon his writing-table and arranged automatically some disordered sheets of foolscap. They were notes on the great principle of the Minimum Wage.

The Lost Inheritance

The story of a "hemi-semi-demi-millionaire's" caution

By H. G. WELLS

"MY uncle," said the man with the glass eye, "was what you might call a hemi-semi-demi-millionaire. He was worth about a hundred and twenty thousand. Quite. And he left me all his money."

I glanced at the shiny sleeve of his coat, and my eye travelled up to the frayed collar.

"Every penny," said the man with the glass eye, and I caught the active pupil looking at me with a touch of offence.

"I've never had any windfalls like that," I said, trying to speak enviously and propitiate him.

"Even a legacy isn't always a blessing," he remarked with a sigh, and with an air of philosophical resignation he put the red nose and the wiry moustache into his tankard for a space.

"Perhaps not," I said.

"He was an author, you see, and he wrote a lot of books."

"Indeed!"

"That was the trouble of it all." He stared at me with the available eye to see if I grasped his statement, then averted his face a little and produced a toothpick.

"You see," he said, smacking his lips after a pause, "it was like this. He was my uncle—my maternal uncle. And he had—what shall I call it?—a weakness for writing edifying literature. Weakness is hardly the word—downright mania is nearer the mark. He'd been librarian in a Polytechnic, and as soon as the money came to him he began to indulge his ambition. It's a simply extraordinary and incomprehensible thing to me. Here was a man of thirty-seven suddenly dropped into a perfect pile of gold, and he didn't go—not a day's bust on it. One would think a chap would go and get himself dressed a bit decent—say a couple of dozen pairs of trousers at a West End tailor's; but he never did. You'd hardly believe it, but when he died he hadn't even a gold watch. It seems wrong for people like that to have money. All he did was just to take a house, and order in pretty nearly five tons of books and ink and paper, and set to writing edifying literature as hard as ever he could write. I *can't* understand it! But he did. The money came to him, curiously enough, through a maternal uncle of *his*, unexpected like, when he was seven-and-thirty. My mother, it happened, was his only relation in the wide, wide world, except some second cousins of his. And I was her only son. You follow all that? The second cousins had only one son, too, but they brought him to see the old man too soon. He was rather a spoilt youngster, was this son of theirs, and directly he set eyes on my uncle, he began bawling out as hard as he could. 'Take 'im away—er,' he says, 'take 'im away,' and so did for himself entirely. It was pretty straight sailing, you'd think, for me, eh? And my mother, being a sensible, careful woman, settled the business in her own mind long before he did.

"He was a curious little chap, was my uncle, as I remember him. I don't wonder at the kid being scared. Hair, just like these Japanese dolls they sell, black and straight and stiff all round the brim, and none in the middle, and below, a whitish kind of face and rather large, dark grey eyes moving about behind his spectacles. He used to attach a great deal of importance to dress, and always wore a flapping overcoat and a big-brimmed felt hat of a most extraordinary size. He looked a rummy little beggar, I can tell you. Indoors it was, as a rule, a dirty red flannel dressing-gown and a black skull-cap he had. That black skull-cap made him look like the portraits of all kinds of celebrated people. He was always moving about from house to house, was my uncle, with his chair which had belonged to Savage Landor, and his two writing-tables, one of Carlyle's and the other of Shelley's, so the dealer told him, and the completest portable reference library in England, he said he had—and he lugged the whole caravan, now to a

house at Down, near Darwin's old place, then to Reigate, near Meredith, then off to Haslemere, then back to Chelsea for a bit, and then up to Hampstead. He knew there was something wrong with his stuff, but he never knew there was anything wrong with his brains. It was always the air, or the water, or the altitude, or some tommy-rot like that. 'So much depends on environment,' he used to say, and stare at you hard, as if he half suspected you were hiding a grin at him somewhere under your face. 'So much depends on environment to a sensitive mind like mine.'

"What was his name? You wouldn't know it if I told you. He wrote nothing that anyone has ever read—nothing. No one *could* read it. He wanted to be a great teacher, he said, and he didn't know what he wanted to teach any more than a child. So he just blethered at large about Truth and Righteousness, and the Spirit of History, and all that. Book after book he wrote and published at his own expense. He wasn't quite right in his head, you know, really; and to hear him go on at the critics—not because they slated him, mind you—he liked that—but because they didn't take any notice of him at all. 'What do the nations want?' he would ask, holding out his brown old claw. 'Why, teaching—guidance! They are scattered upon the hills like sheep without a shepherd. There is War and Rumours of War, the unlaid Spirit of Discord abroad in the land, Nihilism, Vivisection, Vaccination, Drunkenness, Penury, Want, Socialistic Error, Selfish Capital! Do you see the clouds, Ted?'—my name, you know—'Do you see the clouds lowering over the land? and behind it all—the Mongol waits!' He was always very great on Mongols and the Spectre of Socialism, and such-like things.

"Then out would come his finger at me, and with his eyes all afire and his skull-cap askew, he would whisper: 'And here am I. What do I want? Nations to teach. Nations! I say it with all modesty, Ted, I *could*, I would guide them; nay! but I *will* guide them to a safe haven, to the land of Righteousness flowing with milk and honey.'

"That's how he used to go on. Ramble, rave about the nations, and righteousness, and that kind of thing. Kind of mincemeat of Bible and blethers. From fourteen up to three-and-twenty, when I might have been improving my mind, my mother used to wash me and brush my hair (at least in the earlier years of it), with a nice parting down the middle, and take me, once or twice a week, to hear this old lunatic jabber about things he had read of in the morning papers, trying to do it as much like Carlyle as he could, and I used to sit according to instructions, and look intelligent and nice, and pretend to be taking it all in. Afterwards I used to go, of my own free will, out of a regard for the legacy. I was the only person that used to go and see him. He wrote, I believe, to every man who made the slightest stir in the world, sending him a copy or so of his books, and inviting him to come and talk about the nations to him; but half of them didn't answer, and none ever came. And when the girl let you in—she was an artful bit of goods, that girl—there were heaps of letters on the hall-seat waiting to go off, addressed to Prince Bismarck, the President of the United States, and such-like people. And one went up the staircase and along the cobwebby passage—the housekeeper drank like fury, and his passages were always cobwebby—and found him at last, with books turned down all over the room, and heaps of torn paper on the floor, and telegrams and newspapers littered about, and empty coffee-cups and half-eaten bits of toast on the desk and the mantel. You'd see his back humped up, and his hair would be sticking out quite straight between the collar of that dressing-gown thing and the edge of the skull-cap.

"'A moment!' he would say. 'A moment!' over his shoulder. 'The *mot juste*, you know, Ted, *le mot juste*. Righteous thought righteously expressed—Aah!—concatenation. And now, Ted,' he'd say, spinning round in his study chair, 'how's Young England?' That was his silly name for me.

"Well, that was my uncle, and that was how he talked—to me, at any rate. With others about he seemed a bit shy. And he not only talked to me, but he gave me his books, books of six hundred pages or so, with cock-eyed headings, 'The Shrieking Sisterhood,' 'The Behemoth of Bigotry,' 'Crucibles and Cullenders,' and so on. All very strong, and none of them original. The very last time but one that I saw him he gave me a book. He was feeling ill even then, and his hand shook and he was despondent. I noticed it because I was

naturally on the look-out for those little symptoms. 'My last book, Ted,' he said. 'My last book, my boy; my last word to the deaf and hardened nations'; and I'm hanged if a tear didn't go rolling down his yellow old cheek. He was regular crying because it was so nearly over, and he hadn't only written about fifty-three books of rubbish. 'I've sometimes thought, Ted—' he said, and stopped.

"'Perhaps I've been a bit hasty and angry with this stiff-necked generation. A little more sweetness, perhaps, and a little less blinding light. I've sometimes thought—I might have swayed them. But I've done my best, Ted.'

"And then, with a burst, for the first and last time in his life, he owned himself a failure. It showed he was really ill. He seemed to think for a minute, and then he spoke quietly and low, as sane and sober as I am now. 'I've been a fool, Ted,' he said. 'I've been flapping nonsense all my life. Only He who readeth the heart knows whether this is anything more than vanity, Ted, I don't. But He knows, He knows, and if I have done foolishly and vainly, in my heart—in my heart——'

"Just like that he spoke, repeating himself, and he stopped quite short and handed the book to me, trembling. Then the old shine came back into his eye. I remember it all fairly well, because I repeated it and acted it to my old mother when I got home, to cheer her up a bit. 'Take this book and read it," he said. 'It's my last word, my very last word. I've left all my property to you, Ted, and may you use it better than I have done.' And then he fell a-coughing.

"I remember that quite well even now, and how I went home cock-a-hoop, and how he was in bed the next time I called. The housekeeper was downstairs, drunk, and I fooled about—as a young man will—with the girl in the passage before I went to him. He was sinking fast. But even then his vanity clung to him.

"'Have you read it?' he whispered.

"'Sat up all night reading it,' I said in his ear to cheer him. 'It's the last,' said I, and then, with a memory of some poetry or other in my head, 'but it's the bravest and best.'

"He smiled a little and tried to squeeze my hand as a woman might do, and left off squeezing in the middle, and lay still. 'The bravest and the best,' said I again, seeing it pleased him. But he didn't answer. I heard the girl giggle outside the door, for occasionally we'd had just a bit of innocent laughter, you know, at his ways. I looked at his face, and his eyes were closed, and it was just as if somebody had punched in his nose on either side. But he was still smiling. It's queer to think of—he lay dead, lay dead there, an utter failure, with the smile of success on his face.

"That was the end of my uncle. You can imagine me and my mother saw that he had a decent funeral. Then, of course, came the hunt for the will. We began decent and respectful at first, and before the day was out we were ripping chairs, and smashing bureau panels, and sounding walls. Every hour we expected those others to come in. We asked the housekeeper and found she'd actually witnessed a will—on an ordinary half-sheet of notepaper it was written, and very short, she said—not a month ago. The other witness was the gardener, and he bore her out word for word. But I'm hanged if there was that or any other will to be found. The way my mother talked must have made him turn in his grave. At last a lawyer at Reigate sprang one on us that had been made years ago during some temporary quarrel with my mother. I'm blest if that wasn't the only will to be discovered anywhere, and it left every penny he possessed to that 'Take 'im away' youngster of his second cousin's—a chap who'd never had to stand his talking not for one afternoon of his life."

The man with the glass eye stopped.

"I thought you said——" I began.

"Half a minute," said the man with the glass eye. "*I* had to wait for the end of the story till this very morning, and I was a blessed sight more interested than you are. You just wait a bit, too. They executed the will, and the other chap inherited, and directly he was one-and-twenty he began to blew it. How he did blew it, to be sure! He bet, he drank, he got in the papers for this and that. I tell you, it makes me wriggle to think of the times he had. He blewed every ha'penny of it before he was thirty, and the last I heard of him was—Holloway! Three years ago.

"Well, I naturally fell on hard times, because, as you see, the only trade I knew was legacy-cadging. All my plans were waiting over to begin, so to speak, when the old chap died. I've had my ups and downs

since then. Just now it's a period of depression. I tell you frankly, I'm on the look-out for help. I was hunting round my room to find something to raise a bit on for immediate necessities, and the sight of all those presentation volumes—no one will buy them, not to wrap butter in, even—well, they annoyed me. I'd promised him not to part with them, and I never kept a promise easier. I let out at them with my boot, and sent them shooting across the room. One lifted at the kick, and spun through the air. And out of it flapped—you guess ?

" It was the will. He'd given it me himself in that very last volume of all."

He folded his arms on the table, and looked sadly with the active eye at his empty tankard. He shook his head slowly, and said softly, " I'd never *opened* the book, much more cut a page ? " Then he looked up, with a bitter laugh, for my sympathy. " Fancy hiding it there ! Eigh ? Of all places."

He began to fish absently for a dead fly with his finger. " It just shows you the vanity of authors," he said, looking up at me. " It wasn't no trick of his. He'd meant perfectly fair. He'd really thought I was really going home to read that blessed book of his through. But it shows you, don't it ? "—his eye went down to the tankard again—" It shows you, too, how we poor human beings fail to understand one another."

But there was no misunderstanding the eloquent thirst of his eye. He accepted with ill-feigned surprise. He said, in the usual, subtle formula, that he didn't mind if he did.

When London was in Ruins

SEPT. 7.—I went this morning on foot from *Whitehall* as far as *London Bridge*, through the late *Fleet Street*, *Ludgate Hill*, by *St. Paul's*, *Cheapside*, *Exchange*, *Bishopsgate*, *Aldersgate*, and out to *Moorfields*, thence through *Cornhill*, etc., with extraordinary difficulty, clambering over heaps of yet smoking rubbish, and frequently mistaking where I was. The ground under my feet so hot that it even burnt the soles of my shoes. In the meantime his Majesty got to the *Tower* by water, to demolish the houses about the graff, which being built entirely about it, had they taken fire and attacked the *White Tower* where the magazine of powder lay, would undoubtedly not only have beaten down and destroyed all the bridge, but sunk and torn the vessels in the river, and rendered the demolition beyond all exp ession for several miles about the country.

At my return I was infinitely concerned to find that goodly Church *St. Paul's* now a sad ruin, and that beautiful portico (for structure comparable to any in Europe, as not long before repaired by the late King) now rent in pieces, flakes of vast stone split asunder, and nothing remaining entire but the inscription in the architrave, showing by whom it was built, which had not one letter of it defaced. It was astonishing to see what immense stones the heat had in a manner calcined, so that all the ornaments, columns, freizes, capitals, and projectures of massy *Portland* stone flew off, even to the very roof, where a sheet of lead covering a great space (no less than 6 acres by measure) was totally melted ; the ruins of the vaulted roof falling broke into *St. Faith's*, which being filled with the magazines of books belonging to the *Stationers*, and carried thither for safety, they were all consumed, burning for a week following. It is also observable that the lead over the altar at the East end was untouched, and among the divers monuments, the body of one Bishop remained entire.—JOHN EVELYN'S DIARY.

The Lighted Candles

By ROBERT HICHENS

I AM very fond of moving about and seeing fresh places, but I hate the tedium of railway travelling. On a misty night, therefore, when I stepped into the Paris express to go to Rome, I anticipated a long and weary journey, and was in no very cheerful mood. I had engaged a berth in the sleeping-car, and had stipulated that it must be in a compartment that held only two, and I had some hopes of having the compartment to myself. But when I came into it these hopes were at once dispelled. The beds had not yet been made, and on the long plush-covered seat a traveller was already established, calmly smoking a big cigar. As I came in, he bowed slightly and cast an inquiring glance upon me. I returned his salutation and his glance, arranged my things as conveniently as possible in the small space allotted to us, replaced my hat by a cap, and sat down beside him.

In a few minutes the train glided out of the Gare de Lyon, and the attendant came to ask if he should make our beds. I glanced at my companion and he at me.

"You wish——" he began.

"No," I said; "I'm in no hurry. I couldn't sleep so early."

"Nor I. Shall we say in another hour, then?"

"Certainly."

I told the attendant, and we were left alone.

Then I lit a cigar and looked for something to read. I had with me a book which I had bought at Victoria, called "Real Ghost Stories," and some papers. The book I lifted up, then laid down again between me and my companion. I thought I would glance through the French papers before I attacked anything else. The papers were full of news of an upheaval in Russia—sad, even horrible, reading. Presently I had had enough, and, turning to get my book, I met my companion's eyes.

"Terrible, this Russian business, isn't it?" I said.

"Frightful. I wonder how it will end."

We fell into a desultory conversation. My companion, a man of about forty, English, but an Englishman of the cosmopolitan species, was agreeable and interesting. Now and then he showed a gleam of imagination which attracted me. I began to be glad that I was not going to be alone on the journey. After some talk about Russia, he said:

"I see you've got a book about ghosts with you."

"Yes," I said. "I haven't read much of it yet. Stead brought it out. Perhaps such a book would bore you."

"Not necessarily."

"In it, I see, he says something to the effect that it is almost impossible to be in a company of people not one of whom has seen a ghost, or had some ghostly experience. I wonder if that is so."

"I don't know. It may be. It would be if I were one of the company—at least, I believe so."

"Then you have had such experience?"

"Well, I think so. And, oddly enough, it had—or so I must believe—some connexion with Russia."

"I wish you would tell it to me."

"I will with pleasure. But, if it is to be interesting, my narrative must be rather detailed and long."

"Capital. I must tell you I'm a writer, so perhaps I shall be the better able to appreciate your story."

"Use it, if you think it's worth using. By the way, are you bound for Rome?"

"Yes."

"So am I. And it was in Rome that these circumstances took place."

"So much the better!"

He smiled. Then, as the train rushed on through the night towards the frontier, he told me very quietly this tale of the lighted candles.

"Although I do not claim to be unusually brave," he said, "I have a peculiar dislike, I may almost call it a peculiar dread, of a coward. If I may say so, it amounts to this—I fear fear. Nothing irritates and distresses my nerves so much as the sight of an exhibition of terror. Nothing makes me

so uneasy as the proximity of a fearful being.

"Well, three years ago I went to Rome in the autumn with the intention of settling down there for the winter. I wished to be quiet and my own master, so I resolved to take an apartment instead of going to an hotel, and as soon as I arrived I intended to visit an agent and to make inquiries as to where I could find a suitable one.

"I arrived in Rome early in the morning, and scarcely had I got out of the train before a porter came up and asked me if I were going to an hotel or if I wanted an apartment.

"Perhaps you know that a good many of the porters in Rome act as touts for flat-owners, and get a commission upon any business done through their means.

"I told the man that I did want a furnished apartment, and he begged me to come at once with him and see the one he had mentioned. He described it as *bellissimo* and *stupendo*, and was so persuasive that I got into a cab with him and went to look at it.

"Before I arrived in Rome I had had some idea of settling in one of the old quarters, of trying to find something in the Via Giulia, perhaps, or the Via delle Botteghe Oscure, something with a touch of romance about it, or a hint of mystery. But when I saw the porter's flat it suited me in many respects so well that I decided to go into it at once.

"It was a modern apartment on the third floor of a good-sized house, looking out upon an open space which was rented by a man who gave lessons in bicycling. As it had no houses opposite to it, and faced south, it got plenty of sun, and was extremely cheerful. It was also well furnished, and contained as many rooms as I required. The rent was remarkably reasonable, and before the morning was over I had taken the flat for three months from its owner, an Italian woman, who kept a tobacconist's shop.

"That very night I was installed in it. Now I must just describe it to you.

"When you entered the flat you found yourself in a hall with chairs and an oaken settle. On the right of this hall were three rooms—my bedroom and dressing-room and the dining-room. These rooms looked out on to the open space I have already alluded to. Opposite to the dining-room, on the other side of the hall, was the drawing-room, which was rather dark, and had a window looking on to a small garden surrounded by the backs of houses. Parallel with this drawing-room was a narrow passage which led to a kitchen on the left, and which ended in a servant's bedroom. Both of these looked out on to the backs of the houses surrounding the little garden, and from their windows one could see the windows of the staircase of the house in which my flat was. This section of my flat, in fact, jutted out at right angles to that part of the house which contained the staircase, and was commanded by the staircase windows. I hope I make myself clear?"

"Quite," I answered.

"There was also a bath-room at the end of the hall between the drawing-room and the dining-room.

"I intended to engage a woman to act as my cook and housekeeper and a man to open the door and valet me. But on the first evening I was alone. The *padrona* came in to make my bed and see that I had candles, matches, and the few things absolutely necessary. Then she withdrew with a *buona sera*, and a hope that I should be comfortable. She was a large and oily Neapolitan, and as she uttered her final remark I thought her bulging black eyes rested upon me with a rather peculiar expression, half searching, half defiant.

"When she was gone I went again over the flat. In the servant's room, upon a table under the window, stood a candle and a box of matches. The candle was new and had never been lighted. Why I did it I don't know, but I remember putting a match to it idly, holding it up, glancing round the room, then setting it down again upon the table, and—I believe—extinguishing it.

"Night had closed in, and presently I went out, dined at a restaurant, looked in at a theatre, and returned home. It was late when I reached the front door of the house and let myself in with one of my two latchkeys. I was at once confronted by the blackness of the stone staircase. All the lights were out, and I had not taken the precaution of providing myself with a candle-end to illuminate my progress to the third story.

"I struck a match and began to go up as quickly as I could. Before I got to the first floor the match had gone out, and I made some groping steps in the darkness. Then I struck a second match, which lighted me to the second floor. There it sputtered

and died down, and I stood still for a moment fumbling for a third match. But there was not one. I had been smoking a good deal during the evening and had exhausted my supply.

"'*Diavolo*'!" I thought.

"Then I remembered that there was a box full on the little table in the hall, and I moved on cautiously, feeling my way, until I reached the staircase window, which looked out upon the windows of my kitchen and the unoccupied servant's bedroom. In the latter there shone a light.

"I stood still. I was greatly astonished.

"Over the window a thin white blind hung down, through which the light was visible. For some short time—two or three minutes I suppose—I stood on the staircase watching it. Who could be there, in my flat, at this time of the night? Had the *padrona* returned to seek something? Or had some malefactor—I drew out my revolver, cocked it, crept up the stairs, and very quietly inserted my key in the door, after some groping, as I was without a light. The door opened, I stepped into the hall and felt for the matches, all the time straining my ears to catch the smallest sound. I found a match, struck it, and set it to the candle. Then, leaving the front door open, I went on tiptoe to the entrance of the passage, at the end of which was the door of the servant's bedroom. It stood open, and I saw the bed and the wall illuminated by the light within. I waited, listening intently. I heard nothing. Then I walked swiftly into the room. It was empty. On the table under the window stood a lighted candle burned down almost to the socket. I took it up and went from room to room. The flat was empty. Nothing had been disturbed.

"When I had finished searching I shut the front door, barred it for the night, and went to bed.

"The explanation of the candle being lighted must be a quite simple one. That was what I was telling myself. I must have forgotten to extinguish it. I remembered lighting the candle. I also remembered extinguishing it. So my mind told me. But my mind must have been playing me false. I must have left the candle burning. And yet I could have sworn—but then we often could have sworn, couldn't we?"

I nodded.

"Telling myself this, giving my own memory the lie, as it were, I turned over and soon fell asleep.

"In the morning I went forth early to an agency and engaged a cook, a charming woman called Lucia, a native of Albano. She agreed to begin her duties with me that very day. This done, I paid a visit to my *padrona di casa*. I had a question to ask her.

"'I suppose there is no other latchkey to my flat besides mine?' I said to her. 'You haven't one you could lend me for my servant?'

"'No, signore, I have only the one.'

"'I'll have another made,' I said carelessly.

"I had been thinking of the lighted candle of the preceding night, and had wished to find out whether the *padrona* had means of access to my flat. It seemed not. Evidently, therefore, my memory had been at fault.

"I went to get another latchkey made for my cook, and dismissed the matter of the lighted candle from my mind—for the time.

"Lucia was married, and lived with her husband not far from me, so till I engaged a manservant I was alone in my flat at night.

"I dined at home that evening, and stayed in till Lucia had gone away for the night. When the front door had closed upon her, I went down the passage to the servant's room. The candlestick had been moved, no doubt by Lucia, and placed on a little stand beside the bed, with a fresh candle in it and the box of matches laid near by. Wooden shutters had been fastened over the windows. I had not noticed them before. I glanced round the room. Then I went out.

"I spent the evening at the Salone Margherita, reading the *Tribuna*, and listening to a variety entertainment. When I got home it was about ten minutes to twelve. This time I had provided myself with a candle-end to light me up the staircase, and I reached my door without difficulty, let myself in, lit my candle, barred the door, and went at once into my bedroom. There I began to undress.

"Now, I must tell you that I am not at all a nervous or suspicious man. I have been about the world and slept soundly in many strange places. Yet that night, when I was about to get into bed, I felt an odd uneasiness come over me, as if I had left something undone, something that imperatively ought to be done. I stood for a

moment in my pyjamas by the dressing-table. What was it that I had forgotten to do?

"After a moment's hesitation I opened my bedroom door and looked out into the hall towards the place where the passage began. A faint light issued from it. Leaving my candle in the bedroom, I went on my stockinged feet to the passage and stared down it. Beside the empty bed the candle was burning, the candle which, to-night, I had left unlighted.

"Again I went into the room and found no one. Again I went over the flat and found everything in its place, no sign of any intruder.

"This time I felt really uncomfortable. It was now obvious to me that someone, some stranger hidden I knew not where in Rome, possessed a key of my door, and, for some reason which I could not divine, visited my flat at night when I was out of the way. What could be this person's purpose? And why should so furtive a creature be so careless as to leave a lighted candle to tell me of his, or her, nocturnal entry? I now felt quite certain that it was not I who had left the candle lit on the previous night. My memory had not betrayed me. For a long time I stood wondering uneasily, and when I at length got into bed I could not sleep.

"I thought again of the *padrona*, that Neapolitan woman with the searching eyes. But she denied having a key of my door. And if she had one, why should she come at night? I wondered who had been my predecessor in the flat. Whoever it was might have carried away a latchkey on leaving, might have it still, or might have lost it. It might have passed into other hands. All my sense of comfort, of being at home in the flat, was rapidly departing.

"Only towards morning did I fall asleep.

"The next day I again called on the *padrona* on some pretext, and in the course of my conversation carelessly asked to whom the flat had been let before I took it. The woman suddenly looked glum.

"'To a Russian,' she answered, after a pause.

"'A man?'

"'No, signore. The Princess Andrakov.'

"'And she has left Rome?'

"'The princess is dead, signore.'

"She shut her loose-lipped mouth with a snap. Somebody came into the shop, and I went away.

"'The Princess Andrakov.' As I went out into the sunshine I was mentally repeating that name and wondering—idly, I thought—what the princess had been like.

"It was a glorious day, and I strolled on till I reached the church of the Sacred Heart, at the top of the steps that lead from the Piazza di Spagna to the Trinita dei Monte. There I paused for a moment and glanced down.

"A peculiar-looking man, young, perhaps twenty-five years old, was coming up from the Piazza. He was tall, fair, with a broad face, a flat nose, very prominent cheek-bones, and long, frizzly light hair. He was dressed in frayed trousers, an old green overcoat, and a soft and dusty black hat. I thought he looked like a Russian student. When he reached the top of the steps he stopped for an instant beside me, then walked on towards the Pincio. I followed—I don't know why. Simply, I had to go somewhere, and on a fine morning what can one do better than walk towards the Pincio? Just in front of the Villa Medici the young man stopped to look at the view over Rome. I stopped, too, drawn to stillness by the splendour of the city lying beneath the splendour of the clear sky.

"And then—I don't know how—we were talking, I and this young man, talking French, and soon with a freedom that was almost like intimacy.

"He was, I found, a Russian, and an art student. We spoke of art, of Rome and its wonders, of—I have really forgotten what else. But I know that presently, when we were going to part, the young man handed me his card, in foreign fashion, and I gave him mine, with my Roman address written on it. He glanced at it, then started, and stared at me rather oddly.

"'Have I given you—what is it?' I asked.

"'Nothing, only—you are living in a house in which I had once an—an acquaintance.'

"'The Princess Andrakov?' I asked.

"'Yes. Did you know her, monsieur?'

"'No; but I have the flat she formerly occupied.'

"The young man looked at me, I thought, with great attention.

"'She is dead, I understand,' I continued.

"'Oh, yes, she is dead.'

"'Did she die in Rome?'

"'Yes, monsieur.'

"'Did she die in the flat?'

"'Yes, monsieur.'

"'I wonder'—I was thinking now of the lighted candles—'I wonder whether she was a careless person,' I said, trying to speak carelessly.

"'Careless, monsieur?'

"'Yes.'

"'Have you any particular reason for asking me that question, monsieur?'

"I hesitated. This young man was an absolute stranger to me, and I am not, as a rule, accustomed to take strangers into my confidence. But there was something in the look of his large, light eyes which told me I might go on. And I did. I related to him what I have related to you—the episode of the lighted candles.

"When I had finished, I said:

"'What I am wondering is this: whether my predecessor in the flat lost her latchkey, or gave it to one of the servants.'

"'The princess had no servants,' he said.

"'No servants?'

"'No, she was a very peculiar person.'

"'Indeed?'

"'Yes, a very suspicious nature. She was afraid to have servants in Rome.'

"'Why?'

"'She was afraid they might be got at.'

"He used a French expression equivalent to that phrase of ours.

"'By thieves?' I asked.

"'Well—no. It is a disagreeable story, but the princess is dead, and——'

"He hesitated.

"'I knew her in Russia,' he said at last. 'Her husband was an important man, a general, at one time a governor of a province in Southern Russia. There had been some trouble there, and he was sent to stamp it out. His methods of stamping out trouble were not appreciated either by the peasants or by the revolutionaries. He was hated, but the princess was more than hated; she was execrated.'

"'Why?'

"'She was an aristocrat of the hardest, most reactionary type. She egged her husband on to excesses. There is no doubt of that. She openly boasted of it. He would not have done half of what he did if it had not been for her. He was the governor of a province, but she was his governor. Everybody knew it. The end of it was that one day at a railway station he was assassinated by a young girl.'

"'Horrible.'

"'The girl disappeared, perhaps to Siberia. The princess disappeared—to Rome.'

"'Was she afraid?'

"'Terrified. I must tell you that she was an old woman, a skinny, coquettish old woman, years older than her husband. And, as I believe sometimes happens with people of advanced age, her nerves, which had seemed to be of iron, suddenly snapped. In one day she was changed from a cruel tyrant into a cringing, terror-stricken coward. That was the day of her husband's murder. For she, too, had been condemned, and she knew it.'

"'That was why she left Russia?'

"'Yes, she fled. She came to Rome and took your flat under an assumed name. For though she was a princess, her real name was not Andrakov. In Rome her fear grew upon her. She believed she had been dogged. She ceased to go out. She kept no servants for fear they might be bribed by those who had vowed to destroy her. The porter's wife brought up her food, and she received it at the front door. She lived in a room at the back of the house, for fear she might be seen and recognized from the street if she went near to the front windows. And finally she died of sheer terror in that back room. A warning had been thrust into her letter-box telling her that her place of retreat was known.'

"'Then she died in the room where the candles are lighted?' I said.

"'A back bedroom, the only one.'

"'Yes; but, excuse me, monsieur, how do you know all this?'

"'Oddly enough, the princess had shown me and my family kindness, monsieur. She was fond of my mother, who had been reader to her. (She was a very intellectual woman.) And she partly paid for my studies in Rome. I ought to be grateful to her, and so I am. But even my gratitude could never make me feel any affection for her. Three or four times I was admitted to see her in the flat. But towards the end she became afraid even of me. She was found dead in that back bedroom, with an expression of abject terror on her face and a guttering candle beside her. They broke into the flat as she did not answer the door when the porter's wife brought her food. It seems she had only just died. But for more than twenty-four hours she had not answered the door.'

"Such was the young Russian's story of my predecessor in the flat.

" I must confess that it scarcely made my new home seem more home-like to me. When I was back again in it my imagination set to work. I called up mentally the 'skinny, coquettish old woman,' barred in alone there, a prey to perpetual terror, living in solitude in the little room that looked out upon the garden, finally finding her sentence of death in the letter-box, and succumbing to an access of senile fear, with a guttering candle to light her into eternity.

" A guttering candle beside her. The young Russian was not without an appreciation of detail. Why had he happened to mention that one? Probably because I had told him of the lighted candles. The mind goes back sometimes without being aware of it. Do we not know this from our dreams?

" My friend of the morning had not offered any suggestion for the elucidation of my mystery. I remembered that only after I had left him. His narrative of the princess had drawn him away, and me with him, into another channel of thought. But, if it had not been so, what explanation could he have suggested? Somebody had means of access to my flat, and had used these means two nights running. That was all I knew. What more could this young man know? My having thus entered into conversation with the only person admitted to the flat while the princess occupied it was one of those strange coincidences which occur continually in life.

" All that day my mind dwelt upon the Russian's narrative and the lighted candles, trying, I think now, to find a link between this dead old woman of an evil nature and the person who came to the flat from which her corpse had been carried out. Those Russians who had plotted her death, could they—— But at this point I had the sense to realize that I was allowing myself to be carried away into absurdity. The person, whoever it was, who visited my rooms, must, of course, know that they were no longer occupied by the princess.

" That night I dined at home, and when Lucia left me and I had been over the flat I settled down in the drawing-room with a cigar and a book. I had extinguished the gas in the hall and left the door of the drawing-room open, for, to tell the truth, I had little inclination for reading. I knew that I was going to listen for the sound of a key inserted in my front door, for a step in the hall. If the visitor of the two previous nights came a third time—well, he or she would find the host who had been lacking before. I said to myself that, of course, no one would come since I was at home. My going out must have been seen. Tonight the fact that I did not go out would doubtless be known. No one would come.

" Nevertheless, I waited and listened with the door open into the dark hall.

" In the distance I heard the muffled roar of Rome. Somewhere out there was the person who came to my flat by night, unless, indeed, the intruder dwelt within this building full of apartments. The time wore on. I read some pages of my book, but scarcely knew what I read, so attentive was my ear to catch the smallest near sound.

" If anyone came he should not enter without my knowledge.

" But at last the distant sounds began to die down. It was deep in the night and weariness overtook me. I resolved to go to bed, and got up to do so, at the same time looking at my watch. A quarter to one. I had had no idea that the hour was so late, and realized for the first time how intently I had been listening, with what anxiety I had been waiting.

" Having lit my bedroom candle, which was on the writing table, I turned out the gas and stepped into the hall. Owing to the situation of the drawing-room I was at once opposite to the passage. It was dark, and the door of the servant's bedroom was shut. Had I shut it? I could not remember. I waited a moment, looking at the door. Instantly I was aware of a pale, small ray of light issuing from the darkness directly before me. It came through the keyhole of the door. Within the room the candle was lighted.

" By whom?

" This time I held my breath. I was conscious of a feeling of extraordinary disquietude, almost of fear, of a strong repugnance against going into the chamber of the lighted candle.

" It seemed to me that, if I did so, I should find within a skinny, coquettish old woman; that as I opened the door all the coquetry would die out of her; that my entrance would be greeted with a harsh, strangled cry of fear.

" At that moment, for the first time, I seemed to be conscious of the nearness to me of terror. And the thought of this terror near me made my hair bristle up on my head.

" What I really wanted to do just then was to go straight out of the flat, down the stairs, and into the open street, to find myself under the stars, to see the lights in the cafés, to hear the hum of happy people. What I did, after a pause, was to relight my candle, walk quickly, with a firm step, down the passage, and brusquely fling open the door of the bedroom.

" Silence, emptiness, and beside the bed, burning steadily, the lighted candle.

" I stood looking round.

" It was a small, uninteresting room, containing a bed, a chair, a table, a washhand-stand, and a stand for a candle by the bed. The wooden shutters were closed. From the wall an oleograph of the Madonna and Child regarded me with lack-lustre eyes. In that bed the old princess had died of terror. Upon that stand had been the guttering candle, lighted as a protection against the trooping terrors of the night.

" And now — who lighted the candles in this room ?

" I sat down on the only chair the room contained, sat down resolutely—for I did it against my will—and tried to reason the matter out. On the previous two nights I had supposed, I had felt quite sure, that someone who possessed a key of the door had come in for some purpose I could not divine, had lighted the candle in order to see to accomplish that purpose, and had gone away, carelessly forgetting to extinguish the candle. But to-night no one had entered the flat. I had been alone in it. And yet the candle had been lighted. By what ? And why ?

" By what ? I had got to this point in my thinking. Was it extraordinary ? There are certain things one can say one knows. That night I knew that no one could have come into the flat without my knowledge. It was impossible to open the front door without noise with a key. Without a key the front door could not be opened at all. I knew that the door had not been opened. The windows of the kitchen and the back bedroom were securely closed and were shuttered. No one could have got in by them. Nevertheless the candle had been lighted.

" Therefore, I asked myself the question : by what had it been lighted ?

" In the passage, when I first saw the ray of light, I had felt as if the old princess were secluded within the room; as if I caught the infection of her fear. But now my terror—for I suppose it must have been the touch of terror that made my hair rise—was abated. I felt calmer, and I tried deliberately to be receptive; to make myself, as it were, an empty vessel into which might be poured the truth of that room.

" I should tell you that, at the time of which I speak, I was neither a believer nor an unbeliever in another world, in spirit agencies. I kept an open mind, capable, I trust, of conviction. Nevertheless, I was not prepared, at a moment's notice, to swallow marvels without investigation. I cannot, however, deny that since my meeting with the Russian student I looked upon this dull little room with altered eyes. And now as I sat in it, I felt about it strangely.

" As I told you, I was now calm; at least, I believe so. I let my mind alone. I sat, if I may use the expression, with all my mental muscles relaxed. The vessel was empty. It seemed to me that something flowed into it and filled it like a fluid ; some

Leisure

By W. H. DAVIES

WHAT is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs,
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

influence, some personality that was inhabiting the room. It seemed to me that I was conscious of the shivering touch of fear; that I heard far, far off, faint and yet horrible, the shuddering cry of fear; that I knew—because somehow I was told—why that candle had been lighted; and that it had been lighted by something that dwelt in that room and was abjectly afraid of being killed in the dark.

"Ridiculous, you will say. The story of the Russian student peopling an excited mind with imaginations. I tried to say the same thing to myself. I left the room presently (I took with me the candle that had been so mysteriously lighted, and carefully shut and locked the door), saying the same thing to myself. I lay awake saying it.

"You must not think I yielded feebly to crazy ideas unworthy of a full-grown man, I did not. I combated them as you would. And when the morning came I resolved that if I had peopled the back bedroom with figments of the imagination, I would people it now with something very different.

"By lunch-time I had engaged a manservant. He was not a Roman, but a Sicilian, who had only just come to Rome in the hope of earning some money. He was about twenty-four, pleasant, and active-looking, and had excellent references from a well-known Sicilian family in Palermo. Like the cook, he was ready to come to me at once, and as I was in a hurry to have him, the bargain was promptly made.

"That afternoon he entered my service.

"Now, at about four the same day I was again at the Pincio, strolling near the parapet of the terrace, and listening to the music, when I encountered the Russian student. He took off his hat and looked inclined to join me. And I was nothing loath. We presently sat down together on two chairs in the sunshine, and I told him of the episode of the previous night. When I had finished I added that I had now engaged a Sicilian manservant, who would sleep in the back bedroom, and that he entered my service that day.

"The young Russian, who had listened to me with deep attention, shook his shoulders with a movement that looked like a shiver.

"'I would not be your servant, monsieur,' he said. 'I would not sleep in the bed where the old princess—ooh.'

"'But this man knows nothing and will feel nothing.'

"'What if the candle is lighted?'

"'Then you——'

"I paused.

"'Monsieur,' he said, 'in Russia we are superstitious. I am glad you have engaged this young man. You say he is of the people of Sicily. The Sicilians are bold, but they are sensitive. This man knows nothing about your flat, about the little room, about the lighted candles. Let him be a touchstone. Can I say that! If he feels nothing, if he sees nothing—very well, there is nothing, and there is some simple explanation of the lighted candles. If not—if he is affected, if he fears, then there is something.'

"He added, after a moment of thought:

"'They say, those who are superstitious, that three lighted candles are a sign of death.'

"'Many English people think that too.'

"'Do you, monsieur?'

"'I have never bothered about such things. The strange—by that I mean the abnormal, using the word in the sense in which it is generally used—has not entered my life until now.' . . .

"Giovanni, the Sicilian servant, settled in very comfortably, and seemed pleased with his room. He was a gay-looking youth, and that evening, when I heard him laughing and talking with Lucia in the kitchen, I felt as if a cloud, which had been lowering over me, were lifting.

"I did not go out that night, and went to bed early, and slept well."

My travelling companion stopped speaking at this point.

"What is it?" I asked. "Is anything the matter?"

"Well," he answered, "I never can recall the next day without a feeling of horror."

"Why? What happened?"

"Simply this. In the morning, when Lucia arrived, Giovanni did not come out of his room. When I got up and asked for him, she said that he had not opened his door. I thought he had overslept himself, went to his room, and found the poor fellow dead."

"Good heavens! Why? What had he died of?"

"There was an expression of terror on his face. I went at once for a doctor, who examined him, and said that his death was caused by heart failure. Although he had looked strong, he had had a very weak heart. The same day Lucia gave me warning. She

said that the Evil Eye had looked upon my flat."

"And you?"

"I removed to an hotel. Do you wonder?"

"Not at all."

"Unfortunately I had taken the flat for three months, and was obliged to pay the rent. I did so, and, of course, it continued to be my flat, although I did not live in it. Giovanni was buried and the flat remained empty, I keeping the keys and able to go in and out whenever I liked."

"And did you ever go there?"

"I did with the Russian student. I must tell you that my acquaintance with him developed into a sort of intimacy. His knowledge of the old princess, I think, attracted me to him. For I must confess that I could never think of the lighted candles and of Giovanni's death without thinking of her. But I soon grew to like him for his own sake. There was something unconventional, enthusiastic, about him that pleased me. But I also had other reasons for seeking him. He puzzled me. Despite his enthusiasm, his frankness, even his apparent carelessness, he was reserved. I was always conscious that there were depths in this young man which I had not sounded, that there were mysteries in his character which I had not explored.

"It was as if one always saw a door wide open, yet could never go into the room beyond, a room that was dimly lit.

"I had told him about the fate of my servant and my departure from the flat. He said, 'You did wisely. Death is there.'

"One day, perhaps three weeks after Giovanni's death, we were dining together at the Café Berardi, near the Piazza di Spagna, when—I scarcely know why—I was moved to tell the Russian that, though I had left the flat, I was often tormented by an itching desire to go back to it, if only for an hour now and then; that something seemed to draw me to the door, yet that, when I was there, I felt a reluctance to enter.

"'Have you ever gone in again?' he inquired.

"'Not since the day I left. Can you understand my sensation?'

"'Yes. Where mystery or fear abide there is always fascination. Why, they say that even murderers find it difficult to keep away from the places where their crimes have been committed.'

"'I suppose——' I hesitated.

"'Yes, monsieur?'

"'I suppose you wouldn't come into the flat with me one night—say to-night—and spend an hour and smoke a cigar?'

"He darted at me a swift look, that I fancied was suspicious.

"'I?' he said. 'Why should I go there?'

"I was surprised by his emphasis.

"'Merely to keep me company.'

"'Oh, I see.' His voice was changed. 'Well, why not?'

"'Perhaps you dislike the idea?'

"With a sort of sudden gush of frankness, eminently characteristic of him, he said:

"'I both dislike and am attracted by it. Why shouldn't I speak the truth, monsieur? I connect your apartment with horror—the death from fear of the princess, my patroness—therefore I am drawn to it. I have long wanted to go there. Yet in all Rome there is no place I dread so much. That is the truth. Make of it what you can.'

"'Let us go,' I said with sudden decision, getting up from my chair.

"He seemed startled by my abruptness, but after an instant's hesitation he got up too.

"'Very well,' he said.

"And again he cast at me a glance that seemed a glance of suspicion. I wondered what it meant. We went out, got into an open cab, and drove to the house in which my deserted apartment was.

"'You've got the key, then, monsieur?' said the Russian, when I gave the cabman the address.

"'Yes.'

"He said nothing more during the drive. When we reached the house it was not yet ten; the porter was still up and lamps were still burning on the staircase. The porter looked much surprised to see me.

"'You have come back, signore!' he exclaimed.

"'Only for a little while. I'm not going to stay.'

"'Better not,' the old man muttered. 'Better not.'

"He glanced at my companion.

"'But perhaps the signore is thinking of taking the apartment. I have seen him here before, when the——'

"'*Basta*,' said the Russian rather roughly.

"And he began to mount the stairs.

"'This signore is a friend of mine,' I said to the porter. 'He has not come after the apartment.'

"And I followed the Russian to the third floor, leaving the old man mumbling to himself.

"I found my friend—I will call him Drovinsky—standing on the third landing, with his hand on the balustrade of the staircase. As I came up he said in a low voice:

"'Now, what are we here for?'

"'Why, to——'

"'No, but what are we going to do? Doesn't it seem rather absurd for two grown men——?'

"'You want to cry off,' I said, rather bluntly, I fear.

"Again that glance of suspicion.

"'No, monsieur. Only let us know why we are doing this.'

"'Inside I'll tell you.'

"I inserted the key in the door and we stepped into the hall. In a moment I had lit the gas.

"'There is gas in the drawing-room, too,' I said. 'Let us sit there.'

"Drovinsky was standing by the hall door, which he had shut.

"'Very well,' he said.

"He followed me closely as I went to the drawing-room.

"'How deserted it looks already,' I said, lighting the gas.

"'Yes. Now, are we to sit down and smoke?'

"'I wonder if I can find a candle. I left some candles.'

"'Why do you want a candle?'

"'Merely to look into the rooms. Wait a moment.'

"I found a candle in the kitchen, lit it, and went quickly over the flat. Meanwhile Drovinsky remained in the drawing-room. When I came back I said:

"'It is just as I left it.'

"'Naturally.'

"'Yes. Well, shall we light our cigars?'

"'And you will tell me why we are doing this?'

"'But you know already,' I said, taking out my cigar-case. 'You yourself have told me. Where mystery and fear abide——'

"And I lit my cigar and sat down. He laughed and followed my example.

"'But, after all, do they, can they, abide here?'

"He glanced round at the very small modern furniture of the small modern room, and laughed again. And his own laugh seemed to answer 'Yes' to his question.

"'I think they can abide wherever tragedy has been. And tragedy has been here.'

"'You mean that poor fellow?'

"'And the Princess Andrakov.'

"'Oh, the princess——'

"'Could anything be more tragic than to die of terror alone, at night?'

"'She had brought terror to others.'

"His voice was suddenly hard. He had sat down near me and had begun to smoke. I confess that, knowing the princess had been kind to him, I was sometimes rather surprised by the way in which Drovinsky spoke of her. I was surprised now.

"'But you were a friend of hers,' I said.

"'Scarcely that. Because she had liked my mother the princess certainly did something for me. Still, I cannot be blind to her character.'

"He looked at me searchingly.

"'What is it?' I said.

"'I wonder—I wonder what your view of me would be if I were to tell you something. It is very strange that here, in this place where she died, I feel a strong, an almost overpowering inclination to speak.'

"He stopped, still looking at me with deeply inquiring eyes.

"'Speak then,' I said.

"'Do you remember my saying at Berardi's that I believed murderers often were compelled to come back to the places of their crimes?'

"'Yes.'

"'Well—I have done that.'

"'You!' I cried, startled.

"'I killed the Princess Andrakov.'

"I sprang from my seat in horror.

"'Wait, monsieur,' said the Russian. 'My weapon was a letter.'

"'What do you mean?'

"'It was I who put into her letter-box the paper which told the princess that her place of concealment was known, and it was the terror caused by that communication that killed her.'

"I sat down again.

"'You meant to warn the princess so that she might escape?'

"'Monsieur, I wished her to die.'

"'Why?'

"'If she had not died, I should have killed her.'

"'Your patroness? The woman who had been kind to you?'

"'I was not a free agent. I belonged to a secret society whose orders I had to obey.

The assassination of the princess fell to my lot.'

"'And you would have——'

"'If she had not died—yes.'

"He spoke calmly, fatalistically, but, as he finished, he glanced towards the door almost as if he expected someone to come in.

"'You were in Rome for that?' I asked.

"'No, monsieur. It was advisable for me to get out of Russia, so I came here. Because I was here I was chosen to kill the princess when it was known that she was in Rome.'

"'And you——'

"'No,' he interrupted. 'I did not tell them. What do you think of me?'

"'I think you have a great deal of nerve.'

"'Why?'

"'To come to this apartment after what I have told you.'

"'But I am not alone.'

"The devil prompted me to say:

"'Would you pass a night here alone?'

"'Why should I?'

"'Would you for a bet?'

"I knew the man was very poor. The devil certainly was at my elbow.

"'I will bet you a thousand lire to one,' I said, 'that you won't do it.'

"'You are joking?'

"'No; a thousand lire to one. *Parola d' onore.*'

"I saw that he was tempted.

"'To-morrow morning I will come here. We will breakfast together, and you shall have a thousand lire.'

"'If I do it,' he said, with obvious hesitation, 'I make one proviso.'

"'What is it?'

"'I will not go into the back bedroom.'

"'You need not.'

"'Very well, then, monsieur, I accept your wager.'

"Oddly enough, directly my proposition was accepted I began to regret having made it.

"'But if you feel——' I began.

"'Monsieur, I accept your wager. *Parola d' onore?*'

"'Certainly,' I replied hastily, seeing that he thought I was jibbing at the idea of losing my money. '*Parola d' onore.*'

"There was a short uneasy silence between us, during which neither looked at the other. Then I said:

"'Well, I think I'll be off now. What time shall I come to-morrow morning?'

"'When you please, monsieur.'

"'Shall we say eight o'clock?'

"'Certainly—eight o'clock.'

"'All right. There's the candle if you want to use the front bedroom. There isn't any gas there.'

"'Thank you, monsieur.'

"A constraint had certainly come between us since the Russian's confession and my suggestion of the wager.

"I went out into the hall. He followed me.

"'You know the front rooms?' I asked.

"'No, monsieur.'

"'This is the dining-room.'

"We went into it. The shutters were not closed, and I went to the window to close them. Before doing so I felt the window to see if it was fastened. It flew open, and, by a faint moonlight, I saw the open space opposite, used by bicyclists for their lessons. A dark figure was standing there motionless as if looking up at the house. I stared at it for a minute. Then I shut the window and closed the shutters. We went together through the two remaining rooms and came to the hall door.

"'Good night,' I said.

"'Good night, monsieur.'

"Again reluctance overtook me—reluctance to leave him there alone.

"'You are really going to stay?'

"'Really.'

"'You don't think——'

"'I am going to stay.'

"His voice was strange as he said those last words. I began to believe that, apart from the money, he now wished to remain, that he had a more personal reason for his desire. And I thought of his words about the fascination of fear.

"'Good night, then,' I said.

"I held out my hand. He took it for a moment. His hand was very cold.

"'Good night, monsieur.'

"His high cheek-bones, light eyes, frizzly hair, disappeared as he softly closed the door.

"I walked home to my hotel, which was at some short distance off, asking myself almost angrily what had prompted me to make the suggestion of the bet. Why should I wish the Russian to spend the night alone in the flat? There could only be one reason and that condemned me. I thought there was some danger there. This bet had forced me to face a fact. I knew now that I believed the flat to be still

occupied by all that was left of the old princess—all that was left above ground. The body was hidden in the grave, but the essence of that formerly terrible, and latterly terrified, human being had been released from the body and remained where the body had died."

At this moment the attendant put in his head.

"It is twelve o'clock, messieurs. Shall I make the beds?"

"I've just finished," said my companion.

"Another five minutes," I said, putting five francs into his hand.

He disappeared, yawning, into the rocking corridor.

"There really is little more to tell," said my companion. "In the morning, at eight o'clock, I was at the flat door. I let myself in with my key, and before I had shut the door, called out in a voice which was deliberately cheery and commonplace:

"'Monsieur Drovinsky!'

"There was no reply. I opened the bedroom door on the right. It was unoccupied.

"'Monsieur Drovinsky! Drovinsky!' I called again.

"Silence.

"With an effort I shut the front door, and, walking softly, went to the dressing-room, then to the dining-room. Both were empty. So was the drawing-room, into which I next looked. I began to think that I had won my bet, that Drovinsky had not remained in the flat for the night. But there were still three rooms to be examined, the bath-room, the kitchen, and—but I knew Drovinsky would not have entered the back bedroom. When taking my bet he had made it a proviso that he need not go into it.

"No one in the bath-room. No one in the kitchen.

"The door of the back bedroom was shut. I confess I hesitated to open it. Of course, Drovinsky had gone away. It was useless to look into this room. He had told me that he would not enter it. My task was over. I turned away from the door. I even walked a few steps down the passage. Then I stopped. I knew I was playing the coward. I was afraid to go into that room. I remembered Giovanni's death, and—I threw open the door.

"Drovinsky lay on the bed, his face turned towards the door, the light, frizzly hair falling across his cheeks. His eyes were open. The flickering flame of a candle, burned down to the socket, wavered across them, the semblance of the inner flame of life.

"But they were dead eyes in a dead man's face."

My companion stopped.

"But," I said, "that's not all?"

"Remember," he answered, "this is a true story. Life is not an adroit novelist who gathers up all the threads."

"Why should the Russian have gone into that room?"

"I imagine—I feel sure—that the fascination of fear led him there."

"And you think—he was visited?"

"As Giovanni was? What else can I think?"

"To me," I said, "the strangest part of the whole story is the lighted candles."

"The corpse candles. And to me. The first, it is true, I may possibly have lighted myself. My memory may have betrayed me. It is just conceivable. The second may have been lighted by someone who gained access to the flat while I was out."

"But the third?"

"To me the third is entirely inexplicable. I once told this story to a man, however, who explained it in this way. He said that Lucia, my cook, must have lighted it and left it lighted by accident when she went home. I told him that after her departure I had looked into the room and found it in darkness. He asked me if I had looked in with a lighted candle in my hand. I acknowledged that I had. Then, he said, he was not convinced. I myself had carried light into the room and might not have observed a light already burning in it. This irritated me, and I said, 'Then my eyes can absolutely deceive me?' 'All eyes deceive at times,' he replied. And then he told me of an odd fact bearing upon his statement. It was this:

"He was in perfect health, and was staying in a country house. He went in the middle of the day into a small room to write a letter. This room had only one door, from which you saw at once the whole of the room. There was no dazzling sunshine, just ordinary diffused daylight. He opened the door and saw that the room was empty. This pleased him, as he did not wish to be disturbed while writing. He shut the door, and, walking quickly forward

to the writing-table, encountered a solid body. There was a man in the room, a fellow-guest standing directly before him. For some reason, quite inexplicable, he had looked hard at this person and had not seen him—had not seen that anyone was there. He told me that when he came up against this invisible man his blood ran cold with surprise, and his bones seemed to turn to wax.

"So the eyes can trick. Well, it may be so with me. How can I, how dare I, swear it was not so?"

"And the Russian's death?"

"Heart failure, like Giovanni's. Since then I have not entered that flat, and I believe it has not been let. Before I took it, it had got a bad name. That must have been why the *padrona* looked at me so strangely. She was wondering if I had heard anything, wondering whether I was brave or merely ignorant."

"No doubt. And one thing more. That dark figure you saw apparently watching the house from the bicycling ground?"

"Ah! I have sometimes wondered whether that dark figure held any key to the mystery. Could Drovinsky have earned the wrath of any of his brothers in crime? Could any enemy have known he was in the flat that night—have gained entrance? Could there have been a scene and could Drovinsky have died in a fit of passion? *Non lo so*, as the Italians say.

"Perhaps the whole thing has a natural explanation."

"But you believe the contrary?"

"And possibly I am a fool."

He threw his cigar end out of the window into the darkness. As he did so the attendant came in once more to make the beds.

And this time we let him make them.

The Shepherd

HOW sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot!
From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

For he hears the lambs' innocent call,
And he hears the ewes' tender reply;
He is watchful while they are in peace.
For they know when their shepherd is nigh.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

TO excel in any profession, in which but few arrive at mediocrity, is the most decisive mark of what is called genius or superior talents. The publick admiration which attends upon such distinguished abilities, makes always a part of their reward; a greater or smaller in proportion as it is higher or lower in degree. It makes a considerable part of it in the profession of physick; a still greater perhaps in that of law; in poetry and philosophy it makes almost the whole.

ADAM SMITH.

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THEN take a second and third story and deal with them in like manner.

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RULES.

1. Entries should be written in ink, or typed, on one side of the paper only, the three sections fastened securely together, and the name and address of the sender marked on the top right-hand corner of *each section*, accompanied by the coupon from the ARGOSY. They should be sent folded in foolscap envelopes addressed to: "Competition," c/o The Editor, ARGOSY, Cassell & Co., Ltd., La Belle Sauvage, E.C.4, to arrive not later than June 21, 1926.
2. No responsibility can be accepted for any entry lost, delayed, or mislaid. Proof of posting will not be regarded as proof of delivery or receipt. Entries cannot be returned.
3. Any of the prizes may be divided at the Editor's discretion.
4. The Editor has the right to disqualify any Competitor for what he may consider good and sufficient reason, and his decision regarding any question relating to this competition must be regarded as final and legally binding by all Competitors.
5. No correspondence can be entered into.

COUPON ON PAGE VI.

The Things which are Cæsar's

Of a maker of men who rendered their due

By OWEN OLIVER

"OLD CÆSAR" was not the man to flinch at adversity. There was no tremor in his voice when he addressed the boys before they broke up for the Christmas holidays, and said good-bye to the school which he had governed for thirty years.

"You may get a better head-master," he concluded, "or one you like better"—the furious shouts of denial drowned his voice for some minutes—"you will never get one more anxious to do well by the school." He paused again during the outbreak of cheers. "If you think that of me—Yes, yes; I believe that you do—remember one thing about 'Old Cæsar,' and pass it on to the new boys to keep in the school. 'We called the old head "Cæsar,"' you can tell them, 'because he was always preaching to us to give Cæsar what is Cæsar's. He meant that we were to be fair to one another, and to everyone; that we were never to deny the debts that we owe for kindness or help; that we were to do good and not merely do well.' Remember that all through your lives and you won't go far wrong. You mayn't climb so far up the ladder of life, but you won't pull anybody else down. Good-bye; and God bless you all!"

His voice did not break even then; and he was cheery—almost jovial—when he shook hands with the boys, one by one, as was his custom. Some of the elder lads were a trifle inarticulate in their farewells; a few of the juniors rubbed their eyes with their cuffs; Jenkin, the scapegrace of the school, snivelled undisguisedly; but Old Cæsar never faltered.

He still kept a brave countenance when they had all gone and he strode away to his sanctum to write the reports, and after he had closed the study door; and that day and the next, till the afternoon of Christmas Eve, when he received a present, bought with a hasty subscription that the boys had raised in the train. Their kindness hit him in a soft spot which adversity had missed.

He was writing the last report when the parcel came, and the sun was just setting over the long fields of snow which he saw from his window. The snow kept the daylight after its time; but it was almost dark before he ceased blinking at the new gold watch and the accompanying card:—

RENDER UNTO CÆSAR THE THINGS WHICH ARE CÆSAR'S.

With much respect and great regret,
From the School.

"The young rascals!" he said, in a voice which tried vainly to be calm. "They know I've always set my face against presents to the masters. The young rascals! We understood one another!

"We understood one another," he repeated, with a shaky note of triumph, when it had grown too dark to re-read the card; and sat a long time, staring at the quiet snow and pondering over the understanding between him and his boys. Sometimes he pushed back his scanty grey hair, and sometimes he sighed, and sometimes he smiled, for the understanding had been shown on occasions in curious ways. Once the upper classes had a "book tea," and the prize went to Ravenhill, who carried a battered old Latin volume without a cover—"*C. Julii Cæsaris. De Bello Gallico.*" It stood for "Our respected head master," of course! On another occasion the lower school secret society (which was no secret to *him*) had passed a resolution: "Old Cæsar is a beast, but no one is to say so, because he's fair." They understood one another. That was the sum total of it all. "The things which are Cæsar's!" Yes, he had fairly earned this tribute from his boys—his boys no longer.

His boys no longer. He paced slowly up and down the study, with his hands under his coat-tails, his long, lean fingers wrestling

with one another, wondering who would buy this charge of three hundred young souls, and how he would deal with them. Would he keep a watchful but kindly eye upon Jenkin? Would he foster the queer, perverse talent of White? Would he allow for the constitutional nervousness of Smith? Would he guard against the outbreak of bullying in the lower school? Would he understand when *not* to interfere—the hardest lesson that a schoolmaster has to learn? In short, would he aim at turning out scholars or men?

Graham would have grown men in the school, if he could have handed it on to him as he intended. He had been with him for eighteen years, and had been his second for twelve. He would have had no uneasiness in giving over the reins to Graham. But he had not meant to resign them to anyone for some years yet. He was only sixty-two, and hale and hearty; and the school was doing better than ever. He had contemplated an addition to the west wing. He had eleven thousand pounds in sound stocks before those swindling bucket-shop circulars tempted him to put it in a salted gold-mine. Now he could barely pay his loss, even by selling the school. His lawyer had hinted at "composition" and "arrangement," but he would have none of it. The school was no longer his, but his creditors'; though his loss was more than their gain. To them it was only money; to him it was—the school! The school that he had made what it was; that he had enlarged six-fold; that year by year he had improved and altered; for which day by day he had thought and planned. Anyhow, he had made the school one to be proud of. He would look round it now to see the work of his hands, and know that it was good.

The lights were not lit in the empty rooms and corridors, but he knew every inch of the place in the dark; knew where each individual boy worked, and played, and slept. He could always locate a disturbance by the ear, and tell what boys were there, and how they would behave. "Hassall's dormitory," he would mutter, listening to the sound of a pillow-fight. "He won't let them go too far"; and he would walk away. "Ward's room and Legge's. There's bad blood between them," he would conclude, and burst upon them like an outraged Providence. He knew the inner life of the school better than anyone but Graham suspected; for to him the school was wife, and child and friend.

This was the general room for the masters. The enlargement which he had made five years before began at this board that he felt in the dark with his foot. The small billiard-table was his last year's Christmas present to them. The queer-shaped, tall arm-chair had come from his own room. Graham said that it just fitted his back, so he gave it to him; and he left it "to keep a place" in the old room when he married and had a house of his own. The consequences of his folly were hard on Graham. He had never told him that he was to have the school, but he must have understood. Who but Graham had a right to succeed to it? And who was so fit to rule it as good-humoured, ruddy, burly old Graham? How slowly he spoke, and how his mind *leapt!* And how he understood boys! Boys and the making of men. Old Cæsar sighed and frowned at himself in the dark.

The rocking-chair was Dale's present to the room when he left. "Dandy Dale" they called him. He was still a dandy when he came down last summer, though twenty years had passed and he had grown prosperous and middle-aged and fat. Old Cæsar saw him still as a tall, slim young man, languidly stroking his well-groomed moustache. *He* had the knack of managing boys. The school would have been safe with him. Carroll, Lewis, and Handley were good men, too. He had been lucky with his masters. The dusk seemed peopled with them. He almost whispered "Good night" as he closed the door.

The new baths and gymnasium that he had spent a year's profits on were here, but the doors were locked; the carpenter's shed, built to his own design, was outlined against the snow; this was the class-room for the very little boys. He seemed to see chubby faces, and hear shrill, eager voices as he entered: "Oh, *please*, sir!" "*Do*, sir!" Little Edwards, who ailed so long, sat in the third row next to the stove; and after he moved up the place belonged to little orphaned Ryatt, who came youngest of any, and used to toddle beside Old Cæsar, holding his hand. Now Ryatt was Ambassador at Berlin. And fierce, red-haired little Batchelor, whose hot temper gave him so much anxiety, but who grew up such a fine lad; and Mason, the dearest little curly-headed chap; and Payne, who would have been his top boy if he had

stayed; and so many others. The room was full of them—the children of a childless man.

He went through many other class-rooms, and stood for a few minutes in each, looking round in the darkness, with his thin chin on his thin hand. Sometimes he stood by the windows, gazing thoughtfully over the stretch of untrodden snow. The snow-fields were not bare to him, but crowded with boys—boys who grew under his eyes to men. It was out there that they learnt, through their sports and games, the lesson of self-government, as he planned that they should. He had always insisted that they should manage their affairs for themselves. If he or Graham intervened it was only with an unobtrusive hint—a few words that seemed unpremeditated, but which they had often discussed for hours! "We must make men of them, Graham," he would say—"men!" And Graham would draw away at his pipe and nod.

He came at last to the big hall, where his footsteps echoed hollowly. A single fire was alight to keep out the damp. He paused in front of it to warm himself. The flames blazed up intermittently and cast a monstrous shadow across the vacant benches, carved with a medley of initials. They were not vacant to him, but full of boys—boys at prayers, boys at work, boys at play, boys laughing with upturned faces, boys cheering, as they had cheered him the other day.

"We understood one another," he cried, almost fiercely, "my boys and I!"

The sound of his voice in the hollowness startled him. He shut his mouth sharply, frowned at himself for dropping even to himself his Spartan mask of restraint, and strode briskly away. He did not think where he was going. It was mere habit that took him to his own class-room—the room where he gave a few lessons to the most advanced boys; for, busy as he was with the management of the school, he could never quite forgo the pleasure of teaching; and the boys who liked learning loved to have a lesson from "Old Cæsar," for he was a rare scholar, though humanity overrode scholarship in him.

He stood with his hand on the door handle for a full minute before he entered that room. He must collect himself, he felt, before he faced the ghosts in here; the boys who knew and understood him best, and who had been almost friends to him; the boys who were old enough and clever enough to be critical of his doings. He seemed as if he were going to judgment before them. And who else could fairly judge him? He would stand or fall by the judgment of his boys. He drew himself up and stalked into his place, leaving the door ajar. He could almost hear the rustle of books and the boys' voices greeting him; almost see Stanley, his last head boy, jump up and place his chair. A well-natured, clever lad that, and likely to do well. He placed his hand on the back of the chair and faced the form. A row of keen faces was watching him from the empty benches. He could not see the benches in the dark, but he could see *them*—his best boys!

Saunders caught his eye first—the earliest of his really brilliant boys. He was leaning back lazily, as usual; a short, sleepy-looking lad, with a girlish face and very light hair. He held his head a little on one side as he asked a question. There never was such a boy to put awkward questions. He would spend hours looking up a point to pose Old Cæsar, but Old Cæsar found the way to pose *him*. He smiled now as he went over the scene again in the dark class-room.

"You have evidently looked up this point with the unkindly object of posing me, Saunders," he had said dryly—and Old Cæsar could be very dry. "Perhaps you will put your knowledge to the more commendable use of instructing me. I do not know the answer. What is it?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," Saunders had said, promptly; and from that time the posers ceased. Saunders was a good boy, and now he was the leader of the Bar. He had to thank Old Cæsar for his prosperity, he always said, when he made his annual visit to him.

The next was Merrill, who was top of the school for nearly two years: a laughing, jesting boy, as good at work as at play; making play of work rather. *He* was a famous comedian now and owned his theatre, and didn't remember a word of his school lessons—only the out-of-school lessons, he had told Old Cæsar—"the lessons that made men of us, sir!"

"You'd have been a man, anyhow, Merrill," he told the empty benches. "You couldn't help it. I had only to drum learning into *you!*"

Then there was Richards, who had passed

from knowledge, and Temple, who became a missionary and died of fever, and Nugent —frank, handsome Nugent, who went so suddenly to the bad. Old Cæsar had spent a summer holiday finding him and setting him on his feet again. Now he was a prosperous and respected citizen. He would help readily enough if he knew of this trouble, and so would the rest of them; but it was out of the question that he should ask help from his boys.

There was Mason also; never the top boy, but perhaps the cleverest, and now a painter of renown.

"I'm sorry I didn't get top, sir," he had said, when he left, "but lessons aren't in my line. I'm afraid I've disappointed you a bit; but—you haven't had a fellow here who's thought more of you, sir."

He had thought a lot of Mason, too—a *lot* of Mason.

Topliffe and Wainwright were good boys also. They were all good boys, all of them —unless—he had never been quite sure about Harwood.

Harwood had become a millionaire—the president of trusts and the chairman of "rings." If the world gave him credit it was for turning out Harwood; but Harwood wouldn't give any of the credit to him. He had no respect for the things that belonged to Cæsar—or anyone. If he wanted a thing he would have it; and Old Cæsar was not sure that he was always scrupulous about the means. He had never known him absolutely dishonest or untruthful; but he sailed near the wind sometimes.

"I hope, Harwood," he had said, "that you will turn out a good man. I am sure you will be a successful one."

Harwood had looked at him in his obstinate, broad-shouldered way.

"Cæsar will have to look out for his own!" he had said. "For succeed I will!"

Old Cæsar had never seen him since, and did not want to. That a boy should leave him despising his favourite counsel was an outrage, and such a boy could come to no good. But it was not *his* fault. He had done his best for Harwood—for all of them. He leaned forward to the empty benches and held up his hand.

"Boys!" he said, solemnly, "I did my best for you. The results of my work have gone from me; but the work that I put into you remains, and the world is richer for it. I have made *men*. And I shall make them no more!"

He groped for his chair in the dark, and sat down on it with his face in his hands. The door that was ajar opened softly.

"My dear old chief!" It was Saunders's voice grown older. "Why didn't you send and tell us?"

"*We'll* see you through!" That was Wainwright.

"We have a right to, sir." That was Topliffe.

"The prodigal sons, come home rich, and all that sort of thing, you know!" He would have known it was Merrill said that, if he hadn't recognized the voice.

"Why, hang it all, sir," cried Nugent, "all I have is yours!"

"My *dear* old chief," said Mason, huskily, "we owe it to the *world*—the men who've got to be—that you should go on here. Good old maker of men!" Mason had always understood him best.

They wrung his fingers and put substantial hands on his shoulders, these ghosts; tall, sturdy ghosts with moustaches and beards. Some of them had grown portly and some of them were a trifle bald; but they laughed, like boys, and boys they were to him.

"My dear lads!" he said. "My dear lads! So you have heard? And you come —of course you come—to offer help to me. I can't take it; but you are kind, most kind! You've wives and families, and I can't rob them. 'The things which are Cæsar's!'"

"Most of what we have is Cæsar's," said a decisive, broad man in the background; "and Cæsar has no right to refuse the tribute that is his."

The old man gave a sudden cry.

"Harwood!" he said. "My boy!"

And in the dark their hands found each other.

"There's nothing on my hand that you need mind shaking it," said the blunt voice. "It's due to you that I've made my pile cleanly, and I don't mind who hears me own it. Graham wrote and told me; and I dug out the other fellows and brought them, because—well, they were better chaps at school than I was, and I thought you'd like to have them round you. 'The things which are Cæsar's!'"

"You, too, Harwood!" cried Old Cæsar, eagerly. "You, too! Everybody who was ever at the school! I—I—confound it all!—I'm growing into a snivelling old man! My boys!—my boys!"

In Remembrance of John Ingerfield and of Anne, his Wife

A tale of Old London

By JEROME K. JEROME

IF you take the underground railway to Whitechapel Road (the East station), and from there take one of the yellow tram-cars that start from that point and go down the Commercial Road, past "The George," in front of which stands—or used to stand—a high flagstaff, at the base of which sits—or used to sit—an elderly female purveyor of pigs' trotters at three-ha'pence apiece, until you come to where a railway arch crosses the road obliquely; and there get down and turn to the right up a narrow noisy street leading to the river, and then to the right again up a still narrower street, which you may know by its having a public-house at one corner (as is in the nature of things) and a marine store-dealer's at the other, outside which strangely stiff and unaccommodating garments of gigantic size flutter ghost-like in the wind, you will come to a dingy railed-in churchyard, surrounded on all sides by cheerless, many-peopled houses.

Sad-looking little old houses they are, in spite of the great tumult of life about their ever open doors. They and the ancient church in their midst seem weary of the ceaseless jangle around them. Perhaps, standing there so many years, listening to the long silence of the dead, the fretful voices of the living sound foolish in their ears.

Peering through the railings on the side nearest the river, you will see beneath the shadow of the soot-grimed church's soot-grimed porch—that is if the sun happen, by rare chance, to be high enough and strong enough to cast any shadow at all in that region of grey light—a curiously high and narrow headstone that once was white and straight, not tottering and bent with age as it is now. There is upon this stone a carving in bas-relief, as you will see for yourself if you make your way to it through the gateway on the opposite side of the square. It represents, so far as can be made out, for it is much worn by time and dirt, a figure lying on the ground with another figure bending over it, while at a little distance stands a third object. But this last is so indistinct that it might be almost anything, from an angel to a horse.

And below the carving are the words (already half obliterated) that I have used for the title of this story.

Should you ever wander of a Sunday morning within sound of the cracked bell that calls a few habit-bound, old-fashioned folk to worship within those damp-stained walls, and drop into talk with the old men who on such days sit, each in his brass-buttoned long brown coat, upon the low stone coping underneath those broken railings, you might hear this tale from them; as I did, more years ago than I care to recollect.

But lest you do not choose to go to all this trouble, or lest the old men who could tell it you have grown tired of all talk, and are not to be roused ever again into the telling of tales, and you yet wish for the story, I will here set it down for you.

But I cannot recount it to you as they told it to me, for to me it was only a tale that I heard and remembered, thinking to tell it again for profit, while to them it was a thing that had been, and the threads of it were interwoven with the woof of their own life.

As they talked, faces that I did not see passed by among the crowd and turned and looked at them; and voices that I did not hear spoke to them below the clamour of the street; so that through their thin, piping voices there quivered the deep music of life and death, and my tale must be to

theirs but as a gossip's chatter to the story of him whose breast has felt the press of battle.

John Ingerfield, oil and tallow refiner, of Lavender Wharf, Limehouse, comes of a hard-headed, hard-fisted stock. The first of the race that the eye of Record, piercing the deepening mists upon the centuries behind her, is able to discern with any clearness is a long haired, sea bronzed personage, whom men call variously Inge or Unger. Out of the wild North Sea he has come. Record observes him, one of a small, fierce group, standing on the sands of desolate Northumbria, staring landwards, his worldly wealth upon his back. This consists of a two-handed battle-axe, value, perhaps, some forty stycas in the currency of the time. A careful man, with business capabilities, may, however, manipulate a small capital to great advantage. In what would appear, to those accustomed to our slow modern methods, an incredibly short space of time, Inge's two-handed battle-axe has developed into wide lands and many head of cattle, which latter continue to multiply with a rapidity beyond the dreams of present-day breeders. Inge's descendants would seem to have inherited the genius of their ancestor, for they prosper and their worldly goods increase. They are a money-making race. In all times, out of all things, by all means, they make money. They fight for money, marry for money, live for money, are ready to die for money.

In the days when the most saleable and the highest priced article in the markets of Europe was a strong arm and a cool head then each Ingerfield (as "Inge" long-rooted in Yorkshire soil had grown to) was a soldier of fortune, and offered his strong arm and his cool head to the highest bidder. They fought for their price, and they took good care that they obtained their price; but, the price settled, they fought well, for they were staunch and true men, according to their lights, though these lights may have been placed somewhat low down, near the earth.

Then followed the days when the chief riches of the world lay tossed for daring hands to grasp, upon the bosom of the sea, and the sleeping spirit of the old Norse Rover stirred in their hearts, and the lilt of a wild sea song they had never heard kept ringing in their ears; and they built them ships and sailed for the Spanish main, and won much wealth, as was their wont.

Later on, when Civilization began to lay down and enforce sterner rules for the game of life, and peaceful methods promised to prove more profitable than violent, the Ingerfields became traders and merchants of grave mien and sober life, for their ambition from generation to generation remains ever the same, their various callings being but means to an end.

A hard, stern race of men they would seem to have been, but just, so far as they understood justice. They have the reputation of having been good husbands, fathers, and masters, but one cannot help thinking of them as more respected than loved.

They were men to exact the uttermost farthing due to them, yet, not without a sense of the thing due from themselves, their own duty and responsibility—nay, not altogether without their moments of heroism, which is the duty of great men. History relates how a certain Captain Ingerfield returning with much treasure from the West Indies—how acquired it is, perhaps, best not to inquire too closely—is overhauled upon the high seas, by King's frigate. Captain of King's frigate sends polite message to Captain Ingerfield, requesting him to be so kind as to promptly hand over a certain member of his ship's company, who, by some means or another, has made himself objectionable to King's friends, in order that he (the said objectionable person) may be forthwith hanged from the yard-arm.

Captain Ingerfield returns polite answer to Captain of King's frigate that he (Captain Ingerfield) will, with much pleasure, hang any member of his ship's company that needs hanging, but that neither the King of England nor anyone else on God Almighty's sea is going to do it for him. Captain of King's frigate sends back word that if objectionable person is not at once given up, he shall be compelled with much regret to send Captain Ingerfield and his ship to the bottom of the Atlantic. Replies Captain Ingerfield, "That is just what he will have to do before I give up one of my people," and fights the big frigate—fights it so fiercely that after three hours, Captain of King's frigate thinks it will be good to try argument again, and sends, therefore, a further message, courteously acknowledging Captain Ingerfield's courage and skill, and suggesting that he having done sufficient to vindicate his honour and renown, it would be politic now

to hand over the unimportant cause of contention, and so escape with his treasure.

"Tell your Captain," shouts back this Ingerfield, who has discovered there are sweeter things to fight for than even money, "that *The Wild Goose* has flown the seas with her belly full of treasure before now, and will, if it be God's pleasure, so do again, but that master and man in her sail together, fight together, and die together."

Whereupon King's frigate pounds away more vigorously than ever, and succeeds eventually in carrying out her threat. Down goes *The Wild Goose;* her last chase ended—down she goes with a plunge, spit foremost, with her colours flying; and down with her goes every man left standing on her decks; and at the bottom of the Atlantic they lie to this day, master and man side by side keeping guard upon their treasure.

Which incident, and it is well authenticated, goes far to prove that the Ingerfields, hard men and grasping men though they be—men caring more for the getting of money than for the getting of love—loving more the cold grip of gold than the grip of kith or kin, yet bear buried in their hearts the seeds of a nobler manhood, for which, however, the barren soil of their ambition affords scant nourishment.

The John Ingerfield of this story is a man very typical of his race. He has discovered that the oil and tallow refining business, though not a pleasant one, is an exceedingly lucrative one. These are the good days when George the Third is king, and London is rapidly becoming a city of bright night. Tallow and oil and all materials akin to them are in ever growing request, and young John Ingerfield builds himself a large refining house and warehouse in the growing suburb of Limehouse which lies between the teeming river and the quiet fields, gathers many people round about him, puts his strong heart into his work and prospers.

All the days of youth he labours and garners, and lays out again and garners yet again. In early middle age he finds himself a wealthy man. The chief business of life, the getting of money, is practically done; his enterprise is firmly established and will continue to grow with ever less need of husbandry. It is time for him to think about the secondary business of life, the getting together of a wife and home, for the Ingerfields have always been good citizens, worthy heads of families, open handed hosts, making a brave show among friends and neighbours.

John Ingerfield, sitting in his stiff, high-backed chair, in his stiffly, but solidly, furnished dining-room, above his counting-house, sipping slowly his one glass of port, takes counsel with himself.

What shall she be?

He is rich and can afford a good article. She must be young and handsome, fit to grace the fine house he will take for her in fashionable Bloomsbury, far from the odour and touch of oil and tallow. She must be well bred, with a gracious, noble manner that will charm his guests and reflect honour and credit upon himself; she must above all be of good family, with a genealogical tree sufficiently umbrageous to hide Lavender Wharf from the eyes of Society.

What else she may or may not be he does not very much care. She will, of course, be virtuous and moderately pious, as it is fit and proper that women should be. It will also be well that her disposition be gentle and yielding, but that is of minor importance, at all events, so far as he is concerned: the Ingerfield husbands are not the class of men upon whom wives vent their tempers.

¶

HAVING decided in his mind *what* she shall be, he proceeds to discuss with himself *who* she shall be? His social circle is small. Methodically, in thought, he makes the entire round of it, mentally scrutinizing every maiden that he knows. Some are charming, some are fair, some are rich, but no one of them approaches near to his carefully considered ideal.

He keeps the subject in his mind, and muses on it in the intervals of business. At odd moments he jots down names as they occur to him upon a slip of paper which he pins for the purpose on the inside of the cover of his desk. He arranges them alphabetically, and when it is as complete as his memory can make it, he goes critically down the list, making a few notes against each. As a result, it becomes clear to him that he must seek amongst strangers for his wife.

He has a friend, or rather an acquaintance, an old schoolfellow, who has developed into one of those curious social flies that in all ages are to be met with buzzing contentedly within the most exclusive circles and concerning whom, seeing that they are neither rare nor rich, nor extraordinarily clever nor

well born, one wonders " how the devil they got there ! " Meeting this man by chance one afternoon, he links his arm in his and invites him home to dinner.

So soon as they are left alone with the walnuts and wine between them, John Ingerfield says, thoughtfully cracking a hard nut between his fingers :

" Will, I'm going to get married."

" Excellent idea—delighted to hear it, I'm sure," replies Will, somewhat less interested in the information than in the delicately flavoured Madeira he is lovingly sipping. " Who's the lady ? "

" I don't know yet," is John Ingerfield's answer.

His friend glances slyly at him over his glass, not sure whether he is expected to be amused or sympathetically helpful.

" I want you to find one for me."

Will Cathcart puts down his glass, and stares at his host across the table.

" Should be delighted to help you, Jack," he stammers in an alarmed tone ; " 'pon my soul I should ; but really don't know a single woman I could recommend, 'pon my soul I don't."

" You must see a good many. I wish you'd look out for one that you *could* recommend."

" Certainly I will, my dear Jack," answers the other in a relieved voice, " never thought about 'em in that way before. Dare say I shall come across the very girl to suit you. I'll keep my eyes open and let you know."

" I shall be obliged to you if you will," replies John Ingerfield, quietly, " and it's your turn, I think, to oblige me, Will. I have obliged you, if you recollect."

" Shall never forget it, my dear Jack," murmurs Will, a little uneasily. " It was uncommonly good of you. You saved me from ruin, Jack—shall think about it to my dying day."

" No need to let it worry you for so long a period as that," returns John with the faintest suspicion of a smile playing round his firm mouth. " The bill falls due at the end of next month. You can discharge the debt then, and the matter will be off your mind."

Will finds his chair growing uncomfortable under him, while the Madeira somehow loses its flavour. He gives a short nervous laugh.

" By Jove," he says, " so soon as that ? The date had quite slipped my memory."

" Fortunate that I reminded you," says John, the smile round his lips deepening.

Will fidgets on his seat. " I'm afraid, my dear Jack," he says, " I shall have to get you to renew it, just for a month or two—deuced awkward thing, but I'm remarkably short of money this year. Truth is I can't get what's owing to myself."

" That's very awkward, certainly," replies his friend, " because I am not at all sure that I shall be able to renew it."

Will stares at him in some alarm.

" But what am I to do if I haven't the money ? "

John Ingerfield shrugs his shoulders.

" You don't mean, my dear Jack, that you would put me in prison ? "

" Why not ? Other people have to go there who can't pay their debts."

Will Cathcart's alarm grows to serious proportions.

" But our friendship," he cries, " our——"

" My dear Will," interrupts the other, " there are few friends I would lend three hundred pounds to, and make no effort to get it back. You certainly are not one of them.

" Let us make a bargain," he continues. " Find me a wife, and on the day of my marriage I will send you back that bill with, perhaps, a couple of hundred added. If by the end of next month you have not introduced me to a lady fit to be, and willing to be Mrs. John Ingerfield, I shall decline to renew it."

John Ingerfield refills his own glass and hospitably pushes the bottle towards his guest, who, however, contrary to his custom, takes no notice of it, but stares hard at his shoe buckles.

" Are you serious ? " he says at length.

" Quite serious," is the answer. " I want to marry. My wife must be a lady by birth and education. She must be of good family —of family sufficiently good, indeed, to compensate for the refinery. She must be young and beautiful and charming. I am purely a business man : I want a woman capable of conducting the social department of my life. I know of no such lady myself. I appeal to you because you, I know, are intimate with the class among whom she must be sought."

" There may be some difficulty in persuading a lady of the required qualifications to accept the situation," says Cathcart, with a touch of malice.

" I want you to find one who will," says John Ingerfield.

Early in the evening, Will Cathcart takes leave of his host, and departs thoughtful and

anxious; and John Ingerfield strolls contemplatively up and down his wharf, for the smell of oil and tallow has grown to be very sweet to him, and it is pleasant to watch the moonbeams shining on the piled-up casks.

Six weeks go by. On the first day of the seventh, John takes Will Cathcart's acceptance from its place in the large safe, and lays it in the smaller box beside his desk, devoted to more pressing and immediate business. Two days later Cathcart picks his way across the slimy yard, passes through the counting-house, and enters his friend's inner sanctum, closing the door behind him.

He wears a jubilant air, and slaps the grave John on the back. "I've got her, Jack," he cries. "It's been hard work, I can tell you; sounding suspicious old dowagers, bribing confidential servants, fishing for information among friends of the family; by Jove, I shall be able to join the Duke's staff as spy-in-chief to His Majesty's entire forces after this."

"What is she like?" asks John, without stopping his writing.

"Like! My dear Jack, you'll fall head and ears in love with her the moment you see her. A little cold, perhaps, but that will just suit you."

"Good family?" asks John, signing and folding the letter he has finished.

"So good that I was afraid at first it would be useless thinking of her. But she's a sensible girl, with no confounded nonsense about her, and the family are as poor as church mice. In fact—well, to tell the truth, we have become most excellent friends, and she told me herself frankly that she meant to marry a rich man, and didn't much care whom."

"That sounds hopeful," remarks the would-be bridegroom, with his peculiar dry smile; "when shall I have the pleasure of seeing her?"

"I want you to come with me to-night to the 'Garden,'" replied the other; "she will be in Lady Heatherington's box, and I will introduce you."

So that evening John Ingerfield goes to Covent Garden Theatre, with the blood running a trifle quicker in his veins, but not much, than would be the case were he going to the docks to purchase tallow—examines, covertly, the proposed article, from the opposite side of the house, and approves her—is introduced to her, and, on closer inspection, approves her still more—receives an invitation to visit—visits frequently, and each time is more satisfied of the rarity, serviceableness and quality of the article.

If all John Ingerfield requires for a wife is a beautiful social machine, surely here he has found his ideal. Anne Singleton, only daughter of that persistently unfortunate but most charming of baronets, Sir Harry Singleton (more charming, it is rumoured, outside his family circle than within it), is a stately, graceful, high-bred woman. Her portrait, by Reynolds, still to be seen above the carved wainscotting of one of the old city halls, shows a wonderfully handsome and clever face, but at the same time a wonderfully cold and heartless one. It is the face of a woman half weary of, half sneering at the world. One reads in old family letters, whereof the ink is now very faded and the paper very yellow, long criticisms of this portrait. The writers complain that if the picture is at all like her, she must have greatly changed since her girlhood, for they remember her then as having a laughing and winsome expression.

They say—they who knew her in after life—that this earlier face, came back to her in the end, so that the many who remembered opening their eyes and seeing her bending down over them, could never recognize the portrait of the beautiful sneering lady, even when they were told whom it represented.

But at the time of John Ingerfield's strange wooing she was the Anne Singleton of Sir Joshua's portrait, and John Ingerfield liked her the better that she was.

He had no feeling of sentiment in the matter himself, and it simplified the case that she had none either. He offered her a plain bargain, and she accepted it For all he knew or cared, her attitude towards this subject of marriage was the usual one assumed by women. Very young girls had their heads full of romantic ideas; it was better for her, and for him, that she had got rid of them.

"Ours will be a union founded on common sense," said John Ingerfield.

"Let us hope the experiment will succeed," said Anne Singleton.

CHAPTER II

BUT the experiment does not succeed. The laws of God decree that man shall purchase woman, that woman shall give herself to man for other coin than common sense. Common sense is not a legal tender in the

marriage mart. Men and women who enter therein with only common sense in their purse have no right to complain if, on reaching home, they find they have concluded an unsatisfactory bargain.

John Ingerfield, when he asked Anne Singleton to be his wife, felt no more love for her than he felt for any of the other sumptuous household appointments he was purchasing about the same time, and made no pretence of doing so. Nor, had he done so, would she have believed him; for Anne Singleton has learned much in her twenty-two summers and winters, and knows that love is only a meteor in life's sky, and that the true loadstar of this world is gold. Anne Singleton has had her romance and buried it deep down in her deep nature, and over its grave, to keep its ghost from rising, has piled the stones of indifference and contempt, as many a woman has done before and since. Once upon a time Anne Singleton sat dreaming out a story. It was a story old as the hills—older than some of them—but to her, then, it was quite new and very wonderful. It contained all the usual stock material common to such stories: the lad and the lass, the plighted troth, the richer suitors, the angry parents, the love that was worth braving all the world for. One day, into this dream there fell from the land of the waking a letter, a poor, pitiful letter: "You know I love you and only you," it ran; "my heart will always be yours till I die. But my father threatens to stop my allowance, and, as you know, I have nothing of my own, except debts. Some would call her handsome, but how can I think of her beside you? Oh, why was money ever let to come into the world to curse us?" with many other puzzling questions of a like character, and much severe condemnation of Fate and Heaven and other parties generally, and much self-commiseration.

Anne Singleton took long to read the letter. When she had finished it, and had read it through again, she rose and, crushing it in her hand, flung it in the fire with a laugh, and as the flame burnt up and died away felt that her life had died with it, not knowing that bruised hearts can heal.

So when John Ingerfield comes wooing and speaks to her no word of love but only of money, she feels that here at last is a genuine voice that she can trust. Love of the lesser side of life is still left to her. It will be pleasant to be the wealthy mistress of a fine house, to give great receptions, to exchange the secret poverty of home for display and luxury. These things are offered to her on the very terms she would have suggested herself. Accompanied by love she would have refused them, knowing she could give none in return.

But a woman finds it one thing not to desire affection, and another thing not to possess it. Day by day the atmosphere of the fine house in Bloomsbury grows cold and colder about her heart. Guests warm it at times for a few hours, then depart, leaving it chillier than before.

For her husband she attempts to feel indifference. But living creatures joined together cannot feel indifference for each other. Even two dogs in a leash are compelled to think of one another. A man and wife must love or hate, like or dislike, according as the bond connecting them is drawn tight or allowed to hang slack. By mutual desire their chains of wedlock have been fastened as loosely as respect for security will permit, with the happy consequence that her aversion to him does not obtrude itself beyond the limits of politeness.

Her part of the contract she faithfully fulfils, for the Singletons also have their code of honour. Her beauty, her tact, her charm, her influence, are devoted to his service—to the advancement of his position, the furtherance of his ambition. Doors that would otherwise remain closed she opens to him. Society that would otherwise pass by with a sneer sits round his table. His wishes and pleasures are hers. In all things she yields him wifely duty, seeks to render herself agreeable to him, suffers in silence his occasional caresses. Whatever was implied in the bargain, that she will perform to the letter.

He, on his side, likewise performs his part with businesslike conscientiousness—nay, seeing that the pleasing of her brings no personal gratification to himself—not without generosity. He is ever thoughtful of and deferential to her, awarding her at all times an unvarying courteousness that is none the less sincere for being studied. Her every expressed want is gratified, her every known distaste respected. Conscious of his presence being an oppression to her, he is even careful not to intrude himself upon her oftener than is necessary.

At times he asks himself, somewhat pertinently, what he has gained by marriage—wonders whether this social race was quite the most interesting game he could have

elected to occupy his leisure—wonders whether after all he would not have been happier over his counting-house than in these sumptuous, glittering rooms, where he always seems and feels himself to be the uninvited guest.

The only feeling that a closer intimacy has created in him for his wife is that of indulgent contempt. As there is no equality between man and woman so there can be no respect. She is a different being. He must either look up to her as superior to himself, or down upon her as inferior. When a man does the former he is more or less in love, and love to John Ingerfield is an unknown emotion. Her beauty, her charm, her social tact—even while he makes use of them for his own purposes—he despises as the weapons of a weak nature.

So in their big, cold mansion, John Ingerfield and Anne, his wife, sit far apart, strangers to one another, neither desiring to know the other nearer.

About his business he never speaks to her, and she never questions him. To compensate for the slight shrinkage of time he is able to devote to it, he becomes more strict and exacting; grows a harsher master to his people, a sterner creditor, a greedier dealer, squeezing the uttermost out of everyone, feverish to grow richer so that he may spend more upon the game that day by day he finds more tiresome and uninteresting.

And the piled-up casks upon his wharves increase and multiply; and on the dirty river his ships and barges lie in ever-lengthening lines; and round his greasy cauldrons sweating, witch-like creatures swarm in ever-denser numbers, stirring oil and tallow into gold.

Until one summer, from its nest in the far East, there flutters westward a foul thing. Hovering over Limehouse suburb, seeing it crowded and unclean, liking its fœtid smell, it settles down upon it.

Typhus is the creature's name. At first it lurks there unnoticed, battening upon the rich, rank food it finds around it, until grown too big to hide longer, it boldly shows its hideous head, and the white face of Terror runs swiftly through alley and street, crying as it runs, forces itself into John Ingerfield's counting-house, and tells its tale.

John Ingerfield sits for a while thinking. Then he mounts his horse and rides home at as hard a pace as the condition of the streets will allow. In the hall he meets Anne going out and stops her.

"Don't come too near me," he says, quietly. "Typhus fever has broken out at Limehouse, and they say one can communicate it, even without having it oneself. You had better leave London for a few weeks. Go down to your father's; I will come and fetch you when it is all over."

He passes her, giving her a wide berth, and goes upstairs, where he remains for some minutes, in conversation with his valet. Then coming down he remounts and rides off again.

After a little while Anne goes up into his room. His man is kneeling in the middle of the floor, packing a valise. "Where are you to take it?" she asks.

"Down to the wharf, ma'am," answers the man. "Mr. Ingerfield is going to be there for a day or two."

Then Anne sits in the great empty drawing-room, and takes *her* turn at thinking.

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JOHN INGERFIELD finds on his return to Limehouse that the evil has greatly increased during the short time he has been away. Fanned by fear and ignorance, fed by poverty and dirt, the scourge is spreading through the district like a fire. Long smouldering in secret, it has now burst forth at fifty different points at once. Not a street, not a court, but has its "case." Over a dozen of John's hands are down with it already. Two more have sunk prostrate beside their work, within the last hour. The panic grows grotesque. Men and women tear their clothes off, looking to see if they have anywhere upon them a rash, or a patch of mottled skin, find that they have, or imagine that they have, and rush, screaming, half undressed into the street. Two men, meeting in a narrow passage, both rush back, too frightened to pass each other. A boy stoops down and scratches his leg—not an action that in ordinary circumstances would excite much surprise in that neighbourhood. In an instant there is a wild stampede from the room, the strong trampling on the weak in their eagerness to escape.

These are not the days of organized defence against disease. There are kind hearts and willing hands in London town, but they are not yet closely enough banded together to meet a swift foe such as this. There are hospitals and charities galore, but

these are mostly in the city, maintained by the city fathers for the exclusive benefit of poor citizens and members of the guilds. The few free hospitals are already overcrowded and ill-prepared. Squalid outlying Limehouse, belonging to nowhere, cared for by nobody, must fight for itself.

John Ingerfield calls the older men together, and with their help attempts to instil some sense and reason into his terrified people. Standing on the step of his counting-house, and addressing as many of them as are not too scared to listen, he tells them of the danger of fear and of the necessity for calmness and courage.

"We must face and fight this thing like men," he cries in that deep, din-conquering voice that has served the Ingerfields in good stead on many a steel-swept field, on many a storm-struck sea; "there must be no cowardly selfishness, no faint-hearted despair. If we've got to die we'll die, but please God we'll live. Anyhow, we will stick together, and help each other. I mean to stop here with you, and do what I can for you. None of my people shall want."

John Ingerfield ceases, and as the vibrations of his strong tones roll away, a sweet voice from beside him rises clear and firm.

"I have come down to be with you also, and to help my husband. I shall take charge of the nursing and tending of your sick, and I hope I shall be of some real use to you. My husband and I are so sorry for you in your trouble. I know you will be brave and patient. We will all do our best and be hopeful."

He turns, half expecting to see only the empty air, and to wonder at the delirium in his brain. She puts her hand in his and their eyes meet; and, in that moment for the first time in their lives, these two see one another.

They speak no word. There is no opportunity for words. There is work to be done, and done quickly, and Anne grasps it with the greed of a woman long hungry for the joy of doing. As John watches her moving swiftly and quietly through the bewildered throng, questioning, comforting, gently compelling, the thought comes to him, ought he to allow her to he here, risking her life for his people; followed by the thought, how is he going to prevent it? For in this hour the knowledge is born within him that Anne is not his property; that he and she are fellow hands taking their orders from the same Master; that though it be well for them to work together and help each other, they must not hinder one another.

As yet John does not understand all this. The idea is new and strange to him. He feels as the child in a fairy story, on suddenly discovering that the trees and flowers he has passed by carelessly a thousand times, can think and talk. Once he whispers to her of the labour and the danger, but she answers simply: "They are my people too, John. It is my work"; and he lets her have her way.

Anne has a true woman's instinct for nursing, and her strong sense stands her in stead of experience. A glance into one or two of the squalid dens where these people live tells her that if her patients are to be saved they must be nursed away from their own homes, and she determines to convert the large counting-house—a long, lofty room at the opposite end of the wharf to the refinery—into a temporary hospital. Selecting some seven or eight of the most reliable women to assist her, she proceeds to prepare it for its purpose. Ledgers might be volumes of poetry, bills of lading, mere street ballads, for all the respect that is shown to them. The older clerks stand staring aghast, feeling that the end of all things is surely at hand, and that the universe is rushing down into space, until, their idleness being detected, they are themselves promptly impressed for the sacrilegious work, and made to assist in the demolition of their own temple.

Anne's commands are spoken very sweetly, and are accompanied by the sweetest of smiles, but they are nevertheless commands, and somehow it does not occur to anyone to disobey them. John—stern, masterful, authoritative, John, who has never been approached with anything more dictatorial than a timid request since he left Merchant Taylors' School nineteen years ago, who would have thought that something had suddenly gone wrong with the laws of Nature if he had been—finds himself hurrying along the street on his way to a druggist's shop, slackens his pace an instant to ask himself why and wherefore he is doing so, recollects that he was told to do so and to make haste back, marvels who could have dared to tell him to do anything and to make haste back, remembers that it was Anne, is not quite sure what to think about it, but hurries on.

He "makes haste back," is praised for

having been so quick, and feels pleased with himself, is sent off again in another direction with instructions what to say when he gets there. He starts off (he is becoming used to being ordered about now). Half-way there, great alarm seizes him, for on attempting to say over the message to himself to be sure that he has it quite right, he discovers he has forgotten it. He pauses, nervous and excited; cogitates as to whether it will be safe for him to concoct a message of his own, weighs anxiously the chances—supposing that he does so—of being found out. Suddenly, to his intense surprise and relief, every word of what he was told to say comes back to him, and he hastens on, repeating it over and over to himself as he walks, lest it should escape him again.

And then a few hundred yards further on there occurs one of the most extraordinary events that have ever happened in the street before or since; John Ingerfield laughs.

John Ingerfield, of Lavender Wharf, after walking two-thirds of Creek Lane, muttering to himself with his eyes on the ground, stops in the middle of the road and laughs; and one small boy, who tells the story to his dying day, sees him and hears him, and runs home at the top of his speed with the wonderful news, and is conscientiously slapped by his mother for telling lies.

All that day Anne works like a heroine, John helping her, and occasionally getting in the way. By night she has her little hospital prepared and three beds already up and occupied, and all now done that can be done, she and John go upstairs to his old rooms above the counting-house.

John ushers her into them with some misgiving, for by contrast with the house at Bloomsbury they are poor and shabby. He places her in the arm-chair, near the fire, begging her to rest quiet; and then assists his old housekeeper, whose wits, never of the strongest, have been scared by the day's proceeding, to lay the meal.

Anne's eyes follow him as he moves about the room. Perhaps here, where all the real part of his life has been passed, he is more his true self than amidst the unfamiliar surroundings of fashion; perhaps this simpler frame shows him to greater advantage; but Anne wonders how it is she has never noticed before that he is a well-set, handsome man. Nor, indeed, is he so very old looking. Is it a trick of the dim light, or what? He looks almost young. But why should he not look young, seeing he is only thirty-six, and at thirty-six a man is in his prime? Anne wonders why she has always thought of him as an elderly person.

A portrait of one of John's ancestors hangs over the great mantelpiece—of that sturdy Captain Ingerfield who fought the King's frigate rather than give up one of his people. Anne glances from the dead face to the living and notes the strong likeness between them. Through her half-closed eyes she sees the grim old captain hurling back his message of defiance, and his face is the face she saw a few hours ago, saying, "I mean to stop here with you and do what I can for you. None of my people shall want."

John is placing a chair for her at the table, and the light from the candles falls upon him. She steals another glance at his face—a strong, stern, handsome face, capable of becoming a noble face. Anne wonders if it has ever looked down tenderly at anyone; feels a sudden, fierce pain at the thought; dismisses the thought as impossible; wonders, nevertheless, how tenderness would suit it; thinks she would like to see a look of tenderness upon it, simply out of curiosity; wonders if she ever will.

She rouses herself from her reverie as John with a smile tells her supper is ready, and they seat themselves opposite each other; an odd air of embarrassment pervading.

Day by day their work grows harder. Day by day the foe grows stronger, fiercer, more all-conquering, and day by day, fighting side by side against it, John Ingerfield and Anne his wife draw closer to each other. On the battlefield of life we learn the worth of strength. Anne feels it good, when growing weary, to glance up and find him near her; feels it good, amid the troubled babel round her, to hear the deep, strong music of his voice.

And John, watching Anne's fair figure moving to and fro among the stricken and the mourning; watching her fair, fluttering hands, busy with their holy work; her deep soul-haunting eyes, changeful with the light and shade of tenderness; listening to her sweet, clear voice, laughing with the joyous, comforting the comfortless, gently commanding, softly pleading, finds, creeping into his brain, strange, new thoughts, concerning women—concerning this one woman in particular.

One day, rummaging over an old chest, he comes across a coloured picture book of Bible stories. He turns the torn pages fondly, remembering the Sunday afternoons of long ago. At one picture, wherein are represented many angels, he pauses, for in one of the younger angels of the group—one not quite so severe of features as her sisters—he fancies he can trace resemblance to Anne. He lingers long over it. Suddenly, there rushes through his brain, the thought: How good to stoop and kiss the sweet feet of such a woman; and, thinking it, he blushes.

So from the soil of human suffering spring the flowers of human love and joy, and from the flowers there fall the seeds of infinite pity for human pain; God shaping all things to His ends.

¶

THINKING of Anne, John's face grows gentler, his hand kinder; dreaming of him her heart grows stronger, deeper, fuller. Every available room in the warehouse has been turned into a ward, and the little hospital is open free to all, for John and Anne feel that the whole world are their people. The piled up casks are gone—shipped to Woolwich and Gravesend, bundled anywhere out of the way; as though oil and tallow and the gold they can be stirred into were matters of small moment in this world, not to be thought of besides such a thing as the helping of a human brother in sore strait.

All the labour of the day seems light to them, looking forward to the hour when they sit together in John's old shabby dining-room above the counting-house. Yet a looker-on might imagine such times dull to them; for they are strangely shy of one another, strangely sparing of words—fearful of opening the flood-gates of speech.

One evening, John, throwing out words, not as a sop to the necessity for talk, but as a bait to catch Anne's voice, mentions girdle-cakes, remembers that his old housekeeper was famous for the making of them, and wonders if she has forgotten the art.

Anne, answering tremulously, as though girdle-cakes were a somewhat delicate topic, claims to be a successful amateur of them herself. John, having been given always to understand that the talent for them was exceedingly rare, and one usually hereditary, respectfully doubts Anne's capabilities, deferentially suggests that she is thinking of scones. Anne indignantly repudiates the insinuation, knows quite well the difference between girdle-cakes and scones, offers to prove her powers by descending into the kitchen and making some then and there; if John will accompany her and find the things for her.

John accepts the challenge, and, guiding Anne with one shy, awkward hand, while holding aloft a candle in the other, leads the way. It is past ten o'clock, and the old housekeeper is in bed. At each creaking stair they pause to listen if the noise has awoke her; then, finding all silent, creep forward again, with suppressed laughter, wondering with alarm, half feigned, half real, what the prim, methodical dame would say were she to come down and catch them.

They reach the kitchen, thanks more to the suggestions of a friendly cat than to John's acquaintanceship with the geography of his own house, and Anne rakes together the fire, and clears the table for her work. What possible use John is to her—what need there was for her stipulating that he should accompany her, Anne might find it difficult if examined to explain satisfactorily. As for his "finding the things" for her, he has not the faintest notion where they are, and possesses no natural aptitude for discovery. Told to find flour he industriously searches for it in the dresser drawers; sent for the rolling-pin—the nature and characteristics of rolling-pins being described to him for his guidance—he returns, after a prolonged absence, with the copper stick. Anne laughs at him; but really it would seem as though she herself were almost as stupid, for not until her hands are covered with flour does it occur to her that she has not taken that preliminary step in all cooking operations of rolling up her sleeves.

She holds out her arms to John, first one and then the other, asking him sweetly if he minds doing it for her. John is very slow and clumsy, but Anne stands very patient. Inch by inch he peels the black sleeve from the white round arm. Hundreds of times must he have seen those fair arms, bare to the shoulder, sparkling with jewels; but never before has he seen their wondrous beauty. He longs to clasp them round his neck, yet is fearful lest his trembling fingers touching them as he performs his tantalizing task may offend her.

Anne thanks him, and apologizes for having given him so much trouble, and he murmurs some meaningless reply, and stands foolishly silent watching her. Anne

seems to find one hand sufficient for her cake-making, for the other rests idly on the table—very near to one of John's, as she would see were not her eyes so intent upon her work.

How the impulse came to him, where he—grave, sober, business-man John—learnt such story-book ways, can never be known; but in one instant he is down on both knees, smothering the floury hand with kisses, and the next moment Anne's arms are round his neck, and her lips against his; and the barrier between them is swept away, and the deep waters of their love rush together.

With that kiss they enter a new life where into one may not follow them. One thinks it must have been a life made strangely beautiful by self-forgetfulness, strangely sweet by mutual devotion—a life too ideal perhaps to have remained for long undimmed by the mists of earth.

They who remember them at that time speak of them in hushed tones, as one speaks of visions. It would almost seem as though, from their faces in those days, there shone a radiance, as though in their voices dwelt a tenderness beyond the tenderness of man.

They seem never to rest, never to weary. Day and night, through that little stricken world, they come and go, bearing healing and peace; till at last the plague, like some gorged beast of prey, shrinks slowly back towards its lair and men raise their heads and breathe.

One afternoon, returning from a somewhat longer round than usual John feels a weariness creeping into his limbs, and quickens his step, eager to reach home and rest. Anne, who has been up all the previous night, is asleep, and not wishing to disturb her, he goes into the dining-room and sits down in the easy chair before the fire. The room strikes cold. He stirs the logs, but they give out no greater heat. He draws his chair right in front of them, and sits leaning over them with his feet on the hearth and his hands outstretched towards the blaze; yet he still shivers.

Twilight fills the room and deepens into dusk. He wonders listlessly how it is that Trim seems to be moving with such swift strides. After a while he hears a voice close to him, speaking in a slow, monotonous tone—a voice curiously familiar to him, though he cannot tell to whom it belongs. He does not turn his head, but sits listening to it drowsily. It is talking about tallow: one hundred and ninety-four casks of tallow, and they must all stand one inside the other. It cannot he done, the voice complains pathetically. They will not go inside each other. It is no good pushing them. See! they only roll out again.

The voice grows wearily fretful. Oh, why do they persist when they see it is impossible? What fools they all are.

Suddenly he recollects the voice, and starts up and stares wildly about him, trying to remember where he is. With a fierce straining of his will he grips the brain that is slipping away from him, and holds it. As soon as he feels sure of himself, he steals out of the room, and down the stairs.

In the hall he stands listening; the house is very silent. He goes to the head of the stairs leading to the kitchen and calls softly to the old housekeeper, and she comes to him, panting and grunting as she climbs each step. Keeping some distance from her, he asks in a whisper where Anne is; the woman answers that she is in the hospital.

"Tell her I have been called away suddenly, on business," he says, speaking in quick, low tones; "I shall be away for some days. Tell her to leave here and return home immediately. They can do without her here now. Tell her to go back home at once. I will join her there."

He moves towards the door, but stops and faces round again.

"Tell her I beg and entreat her not to stop in this place an hour longer. There is nothing to keep her now. It is all over; there is nothing that cannot be done by anyone. Tell her she *must* go home—this very night. Tell her if she loves me to leave this place at once."

The woman, a little bewildered by his vehemence, promises, and disappears down the stairs. He takes his hat and cloak from the chair on which he has thrown them, and turns once more to cross the hall. As he does so, the door opens and Anne enters.

He darts back into the shadow, squeezing himself against the wall. Anne calls to him, laughingly, then, as he does not answer, with a frightened accent:

"John, John, dear. Was not that you? Are not you there?"

He holds his breath, and crouches still closer into the dark corner; and Anne, thinking she must have been mistaken in the dim light, passes him and goes upstairs.

Then he creeps stealthily to the door, lets himself out and closes it softly behind him.

After the lapse of a few minutes the old housekeeper plods upstairs and delivers John's message. Anne, finding it altogether incomprehensible, subjects the poor dame to severe examination, but fails to elicit anything further. "What is the meaning of it? What 'business' can have compelled John, who for ten weeks has never let the word escape his lips, to leave her like this—without a word! without a kiss!" Then suddenly she remembers the incident of a few moments ago, when she had called to him, thinking she saw him, and he did not answer, and the whole truth strikes her.

She refastens the bonnet strings she has been slowly untying, and goes down and out into the wet street.

She makes her way rapidly to the house of the only doctor resident in the neighbourhood—a big, brusque-mannered man, who, throughout these terrible two months, has been their chief stay and help. He meets her on her entrance with an embarrassed air that tells its own tale:—

How should he know where John is? Who told her John had the fever—a great strong hulking fellow like that. She has been working too hard, and has got fever on the brain. She must go straight back home or she will be having it herself. She is much more likely to take it than John.

Anne, waiting till he has finished jerking out sentences, while stamping up and down the room, says gently:

"If you will not tell me I must find out from someone else, that is all." Then, her quick eyes noting his momentary hesitation, she lays her little hand on his rough paw, and, with the shamelessness of a woman who loves deeply, wheedles everything out of him that he has promised to keep secret.

He stops her, however, as she is leaving the room. "Don't go into him now," he says, "he will worry about you. Wait till to-morrow."

So while John lies counting endless casks of tallow Anne sits by his side, tending her last "case."

Often in his delirium he calls her name, and she takes his thin hand in hers and holds it, and he falls asleep.

Each morning the doctor comes and looks at him, asks a few questions, gives a few commonplace directions, but makes no comment. It would be idle his attempting to deceive her.

The days move slowly through the darkened room. Anne watches his thin hands grow thinner, his sunken eyes grow bigger; yet remains strangely calm, almost contented.

Very near the end there comes an hour when John wakes as from a dream, and remembers all things clearly.

He looks at her half gratefully, half-reproachfully. "Anne, why are you here?" he asks in a low, laboured voice. "Did they not give you my message?"

For answer she turns her deep eyes upon him. "Would you have gone away and left me here to die?" she questions him, with a faint smile.

She bends her head down nearer to him so that her soft hair falls about his face. "Our lives were one, dear," she whispers to him. "I could not have lived without you; God knew that. We shall be together, always."

She kisses him, and laying his head upon her breast, softly strokes it as she might a child's; and he puts his weak arms around her.

Later on she feels them growing cold about her, and lays him gently back upon the bed, looks for the last time into his eyes, then draws the lids down over them.

His people ask that they may bury him in the churchyard hard by, so that he may always be among them; and, Anne consenting, they do all things necessary with their own hands, wishful that no unloving labour may be mingled with their work. They lay him close to the porch, where going in and out the church, their feet will pass near to him; and one among them who is cunning with the graver's chisel shapes the stone.

At the head he carves in bas-relief the figure of the good Samaritan tending the brother, fallen by the way, and underneath the letters: "In remembrance of John Ingerfield." He thinks to put a verse of scripture immediately after; but the gruff doctor says, "Better leave a space, in case you want to add another name." So the stone remains a little while unfinished; till the same hand carves thereon, a few weeks later, "And of Anne, his wife."

Cap'en Jollyfax's Gun

A stubborn old salt and a cunning widow

By ARTHUR MORRISON

THE fame of Cap'en Jollyfax's gun spread wide over Thamesmouth and the coasts thereabout in the years before and after the middle of the nineteenth century. The gun was no such important thing to look at, being a little brass cannon short of a yard long, standing in a neat little circle of crushed cockle-shell, with a border of nicely matched flints, by the side of Cap'en Jollyfax's white flagstaff, before Cap'en Jollyfax's blue front door, on the green ridge that backed the marshes and overlooked the sea. But small as Cap'en Jollyfax's gun might be to look at, it was most amazingly large to hear; perhaps not so deep and thunderous as loud and angry, with a ringing bang that seemed to tear the ear-drums.

Cap'en Jollyfax fired the gun at midnight on Christmas Eve, to start the carollers. Again he fired it at midnight between the old year and the new, to welcome the year; on the ninth of January, because that was the anniversary of Nelson's funeral, and on the twenty-eighth, because that was the date of the battle of Aliwal, then a recent victory. He fired it on the Queen's birthday, on Waterloo Day, Trafalgar Day, St. Clement's Day—for Clement was the parish saint—and on the anniversary of the Battle of the Nile; and on the fifth of November he fired it at intervals all day long, and as fast as he could clean and load it after dark. He also fired it on his own birthday, on Roboshobery Dove's, Sam Prentice's, old Tom Blyth's, and any other casual birthday he might hear of. He fired it in commemoration of every victory reported during the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, he fired it to celebrate all weddings, some christenings, and once when they hanged a man at Springfield gaol.

Cap'en Jollyfax was a retired master mariner of lusty girth and wide and brilliant countenance. In the intervals between the discharges of his gun he painted his cottage, his flagstaff, his garden fence and gate, and any other thing that was his on which paint would stay, except the gun, which he kept neatly scoured and polished.

He painted the flagstaff white, the fence green, and the cottage in several colours; and the abiding mystery of Cap'en Jollyfax's establishment was what ultimately became of the paint. For a new coat succeeded the last very soon after the surface was sufficiently dry, and the consumption of paint was vast; and yet the flagstaff never seemed to grow much thicker, nor did the fence, as a reasonable person would expect, develop into a continuous wall of paint, supported within by a timber skeleton.

Cap'en Jollyfax was a popular man on the whole, though perhaps more particularly so with boys, because of his gun. They would congregate about the fence to watch him clean it and load it, and the happiest of all boys was the one who chanced to be nearest when it was fired, and whose ears were loudest assailed by the rending bang that was so delightful to every boy's senses. Boys dreamed at night of some impossible adventure by the issue whereof the happy dreamer was accorded the reward of permission to fire Cap'en Jollyfax's gun; and one boy at least formed a dark project of hoarding pennies, buying powder, escaping by perilous descent from his bedroom window, and firing Cap'en Jollyfax's gun lawlessly in the depth of night.

But if the gun enhanced Cap'en Jollyfax's popularity among the boys, its tendency was otherway with the women—those in particular who lived near enough to be startled by its noise. The natural feminine distrust of all guns in all circumstances was increased in the case of a brass cannon, which might go off at any moment of Cap'en Jollyfax's crowded calendar. And it was asserted that Mrs. Billing, the widow, who lived at the hill-foot, exactly under Cap'en Jollyfax's line of fire, had been startled into the destruction of three basins and a large dish within one month of many birthdays.

Mrs. Billing, indeed, as was to be expected from her situation, was the brass gun's chief enemy. Consequently, if Cap'en Jollyfax had dragged his gun up the aisle of Leigh Church and fired it under the pulpit he could scarcely have startled the parishioners more than did the rector when he first read the banns of marriage between John Jollyfax, bachelor, and Mary Ann Billing, widow, both of that parish.

Except for the gun there need have been little to startle Leigh, for Cap'en Jollyfax was none so old, as retired skippers went thereabout, and Mrs. Billing was as neat and pleasant a widow of forty-two as might be found in Essex, where the widows have always been admirable. Moreover, she had no encumbrance in the way of children.

But there was no mistaking the fact now, even for the deaf who were not at church. For the succeeding fortnight and a day or two over Cap'en Jollyfax and Mrs. Billing were visible, day by day and arm-in-arm, from shop to shop, in Leigh High Street. The result was no great advance in the retail commerce of Leigh—in fact, none. The household appointments of both Cap'en Jollyfax and Mrs. Billing were fairly complete in their humble way; and when Mrs. Billing had triumphantly hauled Cap'en Jollyfax into an ironmonger's in pursuit of a certain fish-kettle or a particular fender, she was certain presently to discover that just such an article embellished Cap'en Jollyfax's kitchen, or her own. Nevertheless, she persevered, for a bout of shopping was the proper preliminary to any respectable wedding, and must be performed with full pomp and circumstance; and if nothing, or very little, was actually bought, so much the cheaper. Mrs. Billing was resolved to be baulked of no single circumstance of distinction and triumph appertaining to the occasion. And Cap'en Jollyfax was mightily relieved to find so much shopping cost so little after all; so that he grew gradually more cheerful as the wedding-day neared, which is said not to be invariably the case in these circumstances.

The wedding was fixed for the morning of a certain Wednesday, and on the evening before the day Mrs. Billing spent some little time in glorious authority on Cap'en Jollyfax's premises, superintending the labour of Mrs. Packwood, who did charing, and was now employed to make the domestic arrangements of the place suit the fancies of its coming mistress. Flushed with hours of undisputed command, Mrs. Billing emerged in the little garden, whereunto Cap'en Jollyfax had retreated early in the operations; and there perceived to-morrow's bridegroom in the act of withdrawing a broomstick from the mouth of the brass gun.

"What ha' you been a-doing to that gun, John?" demanded Mrs. Billing rather peremptorily, eyeing the weapon askant.

"A-givin' her a rub up inside an' out," answered Cap'en Jollyfax placably. "An' I've just rammed her with a good big charge ready for to-morrow."

"Why for to-morrow?" Mrs. Billing's voice was a trifle sharper still, and she turned a fresh glance of unmistakable dislike on the gun.

"Why for to-morrow?" Cap'en Jollyfax repeated wonderingly. "Why, weddin'-day, o' course. Touch her off when we come home from church."

"Nothin' o' the sort." She spoke now with a positive snap. "A nasty, dangerous, banging thing as frightens people out o' their seven senses. I won't hev it. Why, 'twere almost more'n I could stand down there at the bottom o' the hill, an' hev that thing go off near me I will not, so there."

Cap'en Jollyfax stared blankly. "What!" he jerked out, scarce believing his ears, "not fire the gun on the weddin'-day?"

"No," Mrs. Billing replied emphatically, "nor any other day, neither. Folk 'ud think you were a little boy, a-playin' with sich toys; an' I can't abear to be near the thing."

The staring wonder faded gradually from Cap'en Jollyfax's face, and a certain extra redness succeeded it. "I be goin' to fire my gun on my weddin'-day," he said firmly.

"You ben't nothin' o' the sort," rejoined the widow, no less firmly; "not on *my* weddin'-day. Nayther then nor after, if I'm your wife. Just you take the charge out o' that gun."

Cap'en Jollyfax shook his head, with something like triumph in his eye. "Won't come out 'cept you fire it," he said. "That's the onny way."

"Very well, then, fire it now—not now, but as soon as I be gone. Fire off your gun for the last time to-night, and be done with sich foolishness."

"Ben't nothin' to fire it for to-day," the old sailor returned shortly. "This gun's my department, an' I'm goin' to 'tend to it. I'm goin' to put the tarpaulin over it now."

an' to-morrow, Polly, when we're back from church, I'm goin' to fire it."

Mrs. Billing bridled. "You're a-goin' to fire that gun before I go to church with 'ee, John Jollyfax, an' not load it agin, nayther."

"I'm a-goin' to fire this gun when we're back from church, an' afterwards when proper."

"Cap'en John Jollyfax, I ben't goin' to church with 'ee till after that gun be fired. So now you know. If you don't fire it to-night you must fire it to-morrow before I turn a step toward church. That's *my* word on it."

"I'm a goin' to fire my gun when I like," growled Cap'en Jollyfax, dogged and sulky.

"Very well," replied the widow, tossing her head and turning away; "then if you want me to wed 'ee, an' *when* you want me to wed 'ee, you'll fire it first. Then, maybe, I'll consider of it. But no wife o' yours I'll be till that powder be fired off. An' so good evenin' to 'ee, Cap'en Jollyfax."

That was the beginning of a period of vast interest and excitement in Leigh and its neighbourhood. Cap'en Jollyfax's gun remained silent all that night, nor was it fired in the morning. What Mrs. Billing's feelings were in the matter, whether she sat anxiously listening for the sound of the gun, as some averred, or dismissed the whole subject from her mind, as her subsequent conversation with Mrs. Peck suggested, are secrets I cannot pretend to have penetrated. Cap'en Jollyfax, on his part, consulted deeply in the morning with Roboshobery Dove, and evolved a scheme of strategy suited to the physical features of the place. As the hour fixed for the wedding drew near, Cap'en Jollyfax, in his best blue coat with brass buttons and his very shiniest hard glazed hat, approached the churchyard and took his seat, in a non-committal sort of way, on the low stone wall that bounded it, with his back toward the church. Roboshobery Dove crouched behind a corner of the same wall, vastly inconvenienced by his wooden leg, but steadily directing his telescope downhill, so that it bore exactly on the door of Mrs. Billing's cottage. It was Roboshobery's duty, as look-out man, to report instantly if Mrs. Billing were seen emerging from the door with her best bonnet on, in which event Cap'en Jollyfax would at once leave the wall and take up his position at the church door to receive her. Failing that, Cap'en Jollyfax would be spared the ignominy of waiting at the church for a bride who never came.

At intervals Cap'en Jollyfax took his pipe from his mouth and roared: "Look-out ahoy!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" came the unvarying reply.

"Hev 'ee sighted?"

"Nothin' but the door!"

Whereat the watch would resume for ten minutes more.

It was three-quarters of an hour past the time fixed, when the rector, himself never very punctual, came angrily to the church door, surveyed the small crowd which had gathered, and became aware of Cap'en Jollyfax's strategy.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded of Mrs. Peck, who, in fact, was spying in the interests of the opposite party. "Where's Mrs. Billing?"

"Mrs. Billing, sir, she say she'll never think o' comin' till Cap'en Jollyfax hev fired the gun."

The rector stared at Mrs. Peck for fifteen seconds, passed his fingers once backward and once forward through his hair, and then, without a word, retired to the vestry.

Roboshobery Dove maintained his watch, and the little crowd waited patiently till the shadow of the dial over the church porch lay well past twelve o'clock, and the legal time for a wedding was over. Then Cap'en Jollyfax hauled out his silver watch and roared, though Roboshobery Dove was scarce a dozen yards off: "Look-out ahoy!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Eight bells!"

With that Roboshobery Dove hauled out his own watch, banged it, as usual, on the socket of his wooden leg, clapped it against his ear, and then held it before his eyes. Finally, having restored the watch to his breeches-pocket, he shut the telescope, stood erect and rejoined his principal; and the two old sailors stumped off solemnly toward Cap'en Jollyfax's cottage.

All that day Cap'en Jollyfax's gun remained silent, and all the next. The day after that was June the first, on which date Cap'en Jollyfax had been wont to fire the gun in celebration of Howe's victory. But this time the Glorious First went unhonoured, and it was perceived that Cap'en Jollyfax was mighty stubborn. Monday, the fourth, was Sam Prentice's birthday,

but Cap'en Jollyfax's gun stood dumb still.

Leigh had never before listened so eagerly for a bang as it listened now for the report that should publish the submission of Cap'en Jollyfax; but still the report did not come. People took sides, and bets were made. It was observed that Cap'en Jollyfax was grown peevish and morose, that he shunned his friends and moped at home.

Mrs. Billing, on the other hand, went abroad as always, gay and smiling as ever. Cap'en Jollyfax might do as he pleased, said Mrs. Billing, but she wasn't going to marry him while the charge remained in that gun. If he chose to fire it out—well, she might think over the matter again, but she was none so sure of even that, now.

The days went on, and Cap'en Jollyfax's friends grew concerned for him. He was obstinate enough, but brooding, it was plain. Roboshobery Dove, with much ingenuity, sought to convince him that by persisting in his determination he was defeating himself, since there was now an end of gun-fire altogether. Cap'en Jollyfax thought a little over that aspect of the case, but did not fire the gun. It was thought, however, that he could scarce hold out much longer. He was said to have been seen one afternoon stealthily rubbing over the gun and renewing the priming.

A fortnight went, and with June the eighteenth everybody expected to see an end of the business; for in truth Waterloo Day would have made the best excuse of the year. But for the first time since Cap'en Jollyfax came to the cottage Waterloo Day passed unsaluted. People wondered and shook their heads; surely it couldn't last much longer?

And indeed it did not. There was another silent day, and then in the dead of night of the nineteenth, Leigh was startled once more by the bang of Cap'en Jollyfax's gun. Louder and sharper than ever it rang in the still of the night, and folk jumped upright in their beds at the shock. Heads pushed out from latticed casements in Leigh Street, and conversation passed between opposite gables.

"Did 'ee hear? 'Twere up at Cap'en Jollyfax's!"

"Hear? I'd think so! Cap'en Jollyfax hev fired the gun!"

And so word passed all through Leigh and about on the moment, within house and out of window: "Cap'en Jollyfax hev fired the gun! Cap'en Jollyfax hev fired the gun!"

But in fact no sleeper in all Leigh bounced higher in his bed than Cap'en Jollyfax himself; and that for good reason, for the gun was almost under his bedroom window.

The gun! It was the gun! Somebody had fired it! Those boys—those rascal boys, rapscallion boys, cheeky boys, plaguey, villainous, accursed, infernal boys! Cap'en Jollyfax fell into a pair of trousers and downstairs in one complicated gymnastic, and burst into the garden under the thin light of a clouded moon. There stood the gun, uncovered, and there by its side lay the tarpaulin—no, not the tarpaulin, it would seem, but a human figure—of a woman in a swoon.

Cap'en Jollyfax turned her over and stared close down into her face. "Why!" he cried, "Polly! Polly! What's this?"

With that her eyes opened. "Be that you, John?" she said. "I den't count 'twould go off that fearful sudden!"

o——————o

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By HONORÉ DE BALZAC

(Specially translated for the "Argosy" by MARJORIE LAURIE)

Observation and imagination, skilfully blended, form the keynote to Balzac's stories. Though an observer of the minutest detail he became something more than a realist; though favoured with a unique imagination he is something more than a romantic. In this characteristic masterpiece are displayed that touch of the bizarre and that sense of originality which gave him his own distinctive place among the world's great writers.

"IT'S simply blood-curdling," she exclaimed as we emerged from Monsieur Martin's menagerie. We had been watching this daring and enterprising person "working," as the posters describe it, with his hyena.

"How," she pursued, "did he manage to tame his animals so thoroughly that he can trust to their affection?"

"It seems to you very mysterious," I rejoined, "but there's really nothing supernatural about it."

"Oh!" she protested, while an incredulous smile hovered about her lips.

"Do you suppose that animals are entirely devoid of passions like our own?" I asked. "Believe me, we may credit them with all the vices of civilization."

She gazed at me wonderingly.

"But I admit that the first time I saw Martin performing I expressed my amazement, just as you did. I was sitting next to an old soldier, who had lost his right leg. We had entered the hall together and I had been struck by his face. He possessed that intrepid countenance, stamped with the seal of war and bearing the imprint of battles, which characterizes all Napoleon's veterans. He had, moreover, that air of frank gaiety which always impresses me favourably. Doubtless he was one of those daredevil soldiers who are surprised at nothing, who can see matter for mirth in the agony of a dying comrade, whom they are ready to bury or strip with equal cheerfulness. They are men quick to action, who confidently challenge the enemy's bullets, and are prepared to fraternize with the devil himself. After subjecting the proprietor of the menagerie to a searching scrutiny, as he left the hyena's cage, my neighbour pursed his lips contemptuously into that significant sneer, wherewith superior people mark the difference between themselves and the credulous.

"I spoke up on Martin's behalf; but my neighbour smiled and shook his head.

"'That's an old game,' he said with the air of one who knew.

"'An old game,' I echoed. 'I wish you would explain what you mean by that.'

"After a few minutes in which we improved our acquaintance, we had dinner together in the first restaurant we saw. Over a bottle of champagne, which I ordered with the dessert, the old warrior's reminiscences flowed vivid and unrestrained. When I had heard his story I realized that his remark was justified."

After I had escorted the lady home, she teased and coaxed me, until at last I promised to write down for her the story the soldier had told me. The next day I brought her this episode, which might have come straight from an epic of "The French in Egypt."

During General Desaix's expedition to Upper Egypt, a Provençal soldier had fallen into the hands of the Maugrabin Arabs and had been carried off into the desert regions which lie to the south of the Cataracts of the Nile.

Anxious to remove themselves out of striking distance from the French troops, the Arabs made a forced march, and did not halt till nightfall. They pitched their camp round a well screened by some palm-trees, near which they had left a cache containing food. As they did not suspect their prisoner of any intention to escape, they merely tied his hands together, and after they had had a meal of dates and given their horses a feed of barley, they all went to sleep. When the gallant young Provençal

saw that his enemies had left him unguarded, he picked up a scimitar in his teeth, held the blade fixed between his knees, severed the rope round his wrists and found himself a free man again. He seized a carbine and a dagger, appropriated a small bag of barley, a handful of dried dates and some gunpowder and bullets, buckled on a scimitar, jumped on a horse and galloped away in the direction, as he hoped, of the French Army. In his eagerness to see a bivouac again, he set spurs to his steed, which was already weary, till the unfortunate animal, its flanks pierced and bleeding, collapsed, leaving its rider alone in the heart of the desert. He walked across the sands for some time with the desperate courage of a convict breaking jail, but at nightfall he was obliged to halt. The sky had all the radiant beauty of the tropic night. He lacked, however, the strength to continue his journey.

¶

FORTUNATELY he had reached the top of a hillock, crowned with a few palm trees, whose green leaves, beckoning from afar, had aroused in his heart the most flattering hopes. In utter exhaustion, he threw himself down on a slab of granite, which, by some freak of nature, was shaped like a camp bed. He assumed that his life was forfeit, and without taking any precautions to safeguard his slumbers he fell asleep. His last conscious thought was one of regret. He was actually repenting of his flight from the Maugrabins, whose nomad life began to appeal to him now that he was far away and without hope of rescue.

He was awakened by the pitiless rays of the sun, which beat straight down upon his granite couch and heated it to an intolerable pitch. He had inadvertently chosen his resting-place on the side remote from the shade cast by the green, majestic crests of the palms. He gazed at this group of solitary trees in bewilderment, for they reminded him of the Saracenic columns, with their graceful shafts and fronded capitals, in the cathedral at Arles. After he had counted the trees, he gazed around him in every direction, and black despair sank down upon his soul. The desert surrounded him like a boundless ocean. On every side the dark sands stretched away beyond the range of vision, and glittered like a steel blade, flashing in a brilliant light. He wondered whether he were gazing at a sea of glass, or at a succession of lakes, smooth as a mirror. Fiery vapour swept in eddying waves across the shifting sands.

As in fair weather at sea, the horizon was bounded by a clear-cut line of light, sharp as the edge of a sabre. The soldier flung his arms round a tree trunk, as if round a friend. Then he threw himself down on the granite rock, in the straight and narrow shadow cast by the palm, and burst into tears. There he remained, gazing in utter despair at the scene of hopeless desolation that met his gaze. He shouted, as if to challenge the solitude. But his voice, lost in the hollows of the hillock, did not carry far and evoked no echo save in his own heart. He was only twenty. He loaded his carbine. . . .

"There's no hurry," he reflected, as he laid down the weapon to which he looked for deliverance. Gazing now at the brindled sands, now at the azure vault, he fell to dreaming of France. He smelt once more, with delight, the reek of the Paris gutters; he remembered all the towns through which he had passed, the faces of his comrades and all the most trivial incidents of his life. And at last this son of the south seemed to see, through the waves of heat, shimmering above the far-flung carpet of the desert, the pebbly soil of his own Provence.

Dreading the perils of these torturing hallucinations, he strode down the knoll on the opposite side from that which he had climbed the previous evening. To his joy he discovered a natural grotto, hollowed out in the huge blocks of granite, which formed the base of the hillside. The remains of an old mat showed that this refuge had once been inhabited. A few paces away, the soldier caught sight of a group of palm trees laden with dates, and the instinct that binds us to life revived within his heart. He now hoped that he might survive until some Maugrabin Arabs should pass that way. Or perhaps, before long, he might hear the noise of gunfire, for at that time Napoleon was marching through Egypt. Cheered by these reflections, the Frenchman knocked down some of the ripe fruit, which clustered so thickly, that the trees seemed bowed beneath its weight. As he tasted the unlooked-for manna, he realized from the luscious flavour of the dates that the former occupant of the cave had tended the palms with care.

From the depths of despair his spirits soared suddenly to a height of almost delirious joy. He climbed again to the top of the knoll and spent the rest of the day

hewing down one of the barren palm trees, which had sheltered him the previous night. Some stories that he vaguely remembered brought to his mind uneasy thoughts concerning the wild beasts that roam the desert. Reflecting that they might come to drink at the spring, which, before it was lost in the sands, bubbled up at the base of the granite rocks, he resolved to protect himself from their incursions by barricading the mouth of his hermitage. But for all the zeal, and energy, inspired in him by his fear of being devoured during his sleep, he had not time to cut up the trunk of the tree before nightfall. He had, however, succeeded in felling it.

At dusk this monarch of the desert toppled to the ground with a crash, which resounded far away in the distance and evoked from the solitude a moaning echo, at which the soldier shuddered as at a voice foreboding disaster. But like an heir, who wastes but little time in lamenting his deceased relative, he began at once to strip the stately tree of the broad, green leaves that graced it so exquisitely. With these he set to work to repair the mat, which was to serve him for pallet. Worn out with the heat and with his labours, he fell asleep under the red granite roof of his damp cave.

In the middle of the night his slumbers were disturbed by a strange noise. He sat up with a start. In the intense silence that surrounded him he could hear rhythmic breathing, which was too forceful and violent to proceed from any human lungs. Extreme terror, enhanced by the darkness, the stillness, and the bewilderment of his sudden awaking, made his blood run cold. Even as he felt his hair bristling under this horror he peered into the gloom, till his dilated pupils discerned two faint specks of glowing yellow. At first he ascribed these points of light to some projection from his own eyeballs. But soon the starry radiance of the night enabled him to make out all the different objects in the cave, and he saw, two steps away from him, the crouching form of some huge animal. Was it a lion, a tiger, a crocodile? He was not sufficiently learned to know how to classify his enemy, but his terror was on that account all the more violent. In his ignorance, every conceivable danger appeared to threaten him at once. He suffered torments, as he marked every change in that stertorous breathing. Alive to every sound, he did not dare to make the slightest movement.

An odour, as strong as that of a fox, but more penetrating, more formidable, filled the cave. When the Provençal became aware of it, his panic reached its height; he could no longer question the identity of his terrible companion, whose royal lair he had chosen for bivouac. As the moon sank towards the horizon, its rays lighted up the cave and gradually revealed, in all its beauty, the spotted coat of a panther. There the lion of Egypt lay sleeping, curled up like a big dog, the peaceful owner of a luxurious kennel at the door of some mansion. The eyes which it had opened for a moment were now closed. Its head was turned towards the soldier. A thousand confused ideas flashed through the captive's mind. He thought at first of shooting the panther, but he realized that it was too near for him to use his carbine, the barrel of which would have projected beyond the creature's head. And what if it were to awaken?

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THIS supposition completely paralysed him. As he listened to the beating of his heart in the encircling silence, he cursed its violent palpitations, caused by a rush of blood, for he feared they might disturb the slumbers, which afforded him time to devise some means of escape. Twice he laid his hand on his scimitar with the idea of striking off the panther's head, but the difficulty of cutting through such thick, short fur, restrained him from this reckless project. To fail meant certain death. It would be better to take his chance in a free fight. He therefore decided to wait till morning. Before long dawn was upon him and he was able to examine the panther. He saw that her jaws were stained with blood.

"She has had a good meal," he said to himself, without speculating whether human flesh had formed the banquet. "She won't be hungry when she wakes."

The fur on her belly and flanks was of the same luminous white as the muscular tail, of which the tip, however, had narrow bands of black. The paws were beautifully marked with rings of small, velvety spots. The fur on the back was a cloudy, golden yellow, very soft and silky, with the characteristic rose-shaped clusters of spots, that distinguish the panther from other felidæ.

His alarming hostess was peacefully reposing in the graceful attitude of a domestic cat curled up on a sofa cushion. Her head, with its straight, scanty whiskers like silver

wires, was resting on the sinewy, blood-stained, formidable paws, which were stretched out in front of her. Had he seen her lying thus in a cage, he would doubtless have admired her grace and the vivid colours, so strikingly contrasted, which lent to her coat such royal magnificence. But, situated as he was, the sight of her sinister beauty filled him with dismay. Even in her sleep the panther produced upon him the effect that the magnetic eyes of a serpent are said to have upon a nightingale.

In battle, amid a hail of bullets, doubtless his courage would have risen, but at the peril that now threatened him he quailed for a moment. Presently, however, a daring idea took shape within his soul and checked the cold sweat that was trickling down his forehead. Like a man goaded to extremes by misfortune, he felt ready to dare death and face its blows. Subconsciously he appreciated the tragedy of the situation and resolved to play his part with honour to the last scene of all.

"After all, the Arabs would probably have killed me two days ago," he reflected. Resigned to death, he waited calmly, and not without a thrill of curiosity, for his enemy to awaken. When the sun made its appearance, the panther suddenly opened her eyes, and stretched herself vigorously as if to shake off her stiffness. Then she yawned and displayed a formidable array of teeth and a tongue which was as rough as a rasp.

"She's like a spoilt beauty," he thought to himself, watching her coquettish and seductive movements as she rolled about. She licked the bloodstains from paws and muzzle and scratched her head repeatedly with the prettiest gestures.

"That's right. Smarten yourself up," muttered the soldier, whose natural gaiety had returned to him with his newly-found courage. "Then we will say good morning."

He caught up the short dagger of which he had relieved the Maugrabins. At that moment the panther again turned her head towards him and stared at him fixedly, but at first without approaching him. The set gaze, the intolerable glitter of her metallic eyes, made the Provençal shudder, especially when she began to creep towards him. But he merely looked at her caressingly, eyeing her steadily as if to hypnotize her, until she was close to him.

Then with a motion as gentle, as tender, as if he were fondling a beautiful woman, he passed his hand down her back from head to tail, tickling with his finger-nails the flexible vertebræ beneath her tawny coat. She lifted her tail ecstatically and her eyes softened. When he had stroked her thus for the third time with calculating tenderness, she began to purr like a domestic cat expressing its satisfaction. Issuing from the prodigious depths of that mighty gullet, the sound vibrated within the cave like the closing chords of a church organ. Realizing the efficacy of his caresses, the soldier redoubled his attentions until he had reduced the imperious courtesan to a state of bewildered stupor. When he felt that he had subdued the ferocity of this capricious companion of his, whose hunger had so providentially been appeased the previous evening, he rose and attempted to leave the cave. She made no effort to hinder him, but, when he had climbed the knoll, she came bounding after him as lightly as a sparrow that flits from bough to bough, and rubbed herself against his legs, arching her great back like a cat. Looking at him with eyes that now glittered less menacingly, she uttered the savage cry that naturalists have compared to the scream of a saw.

"Isn't she exacting!" he exclaimed with a smile.

He ventured to play with her ears; then he stroked and scratched her head vigorously with his finger-nails. He followed up this success by tickling her skull with the point of his dagger, watching all the time for an opportunity to kill her. But when he realized how hard her bones were, he trembled lest his attempt should fail. The sultana of the desert showed her appreciation of her slave's talents by raising her head and stretching her neck, while the tranquillity of her demeanour expressed her beatitude. He suddenly realized that his only hope of killing this savage princess with a single blow was to stab her in the throat. But, as he raised his dagger, the panther, who for the moment had had her fill of caresses, lay down at his feet in a graceful attitude. From time to time she cast at him a look, of which the natural fierceness was tempered with a vague friendliness.

Leaning against a palm tree, the unfortunate soldier ate some dates and sped a searching glance, now at the desert in hopes of rescue, now at his dread companion, to keep watch on her mood of precarious clemency. Her gaze followed each date

stone as he threw it away, and a look of unspeakable distrust came into her eyes. She considered the soldier with calculating prudence, but her scrutiny reassured her. For when he had finished his frugal meal she licked his shoes, her rough, muscular tongue deftly removing all the caked dust from the creases.

"But what when she is hungry?" thought the soldier ruefully.

He blanched at the prospect. Nevertheless his curiosity led him to measure the panther's proportions. She was certainly a magnificent specimen, three feet in height and four feet in length, not including her formidable tail, which was as round as a club and nearly three feet long. Her head was almost as large as that of a lioness and was distinguished by an expression of unusual subtlety. The cold cruelty of the tiger no doubt predominated, but at the same time it bore a vague resemblance to the face of a beguiling woman. At that moment the solitary queen had a look of gaiety like a drunken Nero; satiated with blood she was ready to play. As the soldier walked tentatively up and down, the panther did not interfere with him, but placidly followed him with her eyes, less, however, like a faithful dog than a huge Angora cat, suspicious of everything, even of its own master's movements. When he looked about him, he caught sight of the remains of his horse lying by the side of the spring, whither the panther had dragged the carcass. About two thirds had been devoured. This discovery reassured the soldier. It accounted for the panther's absence and the respect she had accorded to his slumbers.

This first stroke of luck nerved him to face the future. He nursed a wild hope that he might continue peacefully hobnobbing with the panther all that day, neglecting no means of conciliating her and securing her favours. He went back to her, and to his unspeakable relief he saw her give a gentle, almost imperceptible, twitch of her tail. Fearlessly he sat down beside her and began to play with her. He seized her paws and muzzle and twisted her ears, vigorously scratched her warm, silky flanks. She acquiesced in this treatment, and when he tried to smooth the hair on her paws she carefully sheathed her curved steel talons. Keeping one hand on his dagger, the soldier still harboured some idea of plunging it into the belly of the unsuspecting panther. But he feared that she might destroy him in her dying agonies. And then his heart reproached him for his murderous designs on a creature with such gentle ways. He felt that he had found a friend in the heart of that illimitable wilderness, and suddenly his thoughts turned involuntarily to his first mistress.

He had nicknamed her "Mignonne" in irony, because she was possessed of such passionate jealousy that throughout their liaison he went in terror of the knife, with which she was always threatening to stab him. The memory of those youthful days suggested to him that he might train the panther to answer to the name of his mistress. Now that he no longer feared her, he was beginning to admire her grace, agility and velvety softness. By the evening he had accepted his perilous situation and even took a curious pleasure in the critical moments that occurred now and then. As for his companion, she had already formed a habit of looking at him, when, in a penetrating voice, he called out "Mignonne."

¶

AT sunset, Mignonne uttered several deep and melancholy cries.

"She has been well brought up," muttered the soldier, "she is saying her prayers," a humorous reflection that did not, however, occur to him until he saw that she still retained her pacific attitude.

"Come, pretty one," he said, "you shall go to bed first."

As soon as she was asleep, he intended to take to his legs and to make for another refuge that night as fast as he could.

Impatiently the soldier awaited his chance of escape. When the time came, he walked swiftly away in the direction of the Nile. He had scarcely progressed a quarter of a league over the sands when he heard the panther bounding in pursuit, and uttering at intervals that shrill cry of hers, which was more terrifying even than the heavy thudding of her paws.

"Upon my soul," he exclaimed, "she must have taken a fancy to me. Perhaps I'm the first male this young thing has met."

At that moment the soldier plunged into one of those perilous drifts of moving sand, from which the wanderer can never hope to extricate himself. Finding himself held fast, he gave a scream of terror. The panther at once seized his collar in her teeth, and, with one vigorous backward leap, pulled him out of the drift as if by magic.

" Ah, Mignonne," he cried, fondling her in a transport of gratitude, " we are friends now through thick and thin. But remember ! None of your tricks ! "

He returned to the cave. Henceforth the desert no longer seemed a solitude. He had found there a companion to whom he could talk, a friend, whose inherent savagery had mysteriously been transmuted into an amazing affection. That night, in spite of his efforts to remain awake and on his guard, he fell asleep. When he awoke, Mignonne was nowhere to be seen. He climbed to the top of the hill and saw her bounding towards him with the peculiar lope of these animals, whose marvellously flexible spinal column renders running impossible. Her chaps were stained with blood. But she accepted the caresses her companion dared not refuse, and expressed her blissful content in a series of short, deep purrs. She gazed at him more tenderly than ever, with eyes brimming with affection.

" Good girl ! " said the soldier as if he were talking to a domestic pet. " Good girl ! Just look at her. Loves to be petted, doesn't she ? But aren't you ashamed of yourself ? You've been eating one of those Maugrabins again. Don't you know they're brutes like yourself ? Well, never mind. But I won't have you gobbling up Frenchmen. If you do, I shan't love you any more."

She frisked with him like a puppy with its master. She let him tumble her over, punch her and stroke her alternately, and now and then she would pleadingly put out a coaxing paw.

Several days passed in this fashion. Now that he had a companion he began to discover the sublimity of the desert.

His hours of dread lent a zest to his hours of peace. He had food and drink and a living creature to occupy his thoughts. His soul was stirred by conflicting emotions, for it was a life of violent contrasts. The desert unfolded its secrets and wove its charms around him. Its sunrises, its sunsets revealed to him glories, of which the world knew nothing. He learnt to thrill at the soft rustle of wings above his head, for birds were rare visitants, and at the sight of clouds, many-hued, ever-shifting wayfarers, melting one into the other. During the night he studied the moonlight effects on the ocean of sand, which the simoom swept into swiftly changing waves and ripples. His was the Oriental day in all its incomparable splendour.

Often when he had revelled in the terrible spectacle of a hurricane, raging in the desert and whirling the sand into red columns and clouds of parching, deadly dust, he hailed with rapture the coming of night, when the skies distilled their healing dew. At times he thought he heard the mystic music of the spheres. The solitude initiated him into the delights of reverie. He spent hour after hour recalling little details of his life and comparing his present existence with the past. Finally, his yearning for someone to love inspired him with passionate affection for his panther. Perhaps it was that his own strong will exercised a mollifying influence over her. Perhaps the constant fighting then occurring in that particular tract of desert supplied her with abundant food. Whatever the reason, she respected the soldier's life, and, seeing her so completely tamed, he lost all his fear of her.

Most of his time he spent in sleep, but, like a spider in its web, he had to be ever on the alert, lest some traveller should enter his sphere of observation unseen and he should miss his chance of rescue. He had sacrificed his shirt to make a flag, and this he flew from the top of one of the palm trees which he had stripped of its leaves. Necessity had sharpened his wits, and, with the help of some small sticks, he contrived to keep the flag unfurled, in case the wind should drop just as the longed-for deliverer glanced his way.

In those lagging hours when hope deserted him, he would amuse himself with the panther. In time he came to know every inflexion of her voice, every expression in her eyes. He had studied all the different shades of the spots that flecked her coat of tawny gold. Mignonne no longer growled when he seized the tuft at the end of her formidable tail, to count its handsome rings of black and white, which, from a distance, gleamed in the sun like niello work. He delighted in the noble sinuous lines of her body, her white belly, her graceful head. The youthful litheness of her movements was a perpetual joy to him, and he marvelled at her suppleness, as she curvetted, gambolled, crept, glided, crouched, slid, tumbled and darted hither and thither. However swift her pace, however slippery the rock beneath her, she would stop dead at the word " Mignonne ! " One day of dazzling sunshine, a great bird came sailing across the sky above them. The soldier left his panther to gaze at the new-comer, but, after

waiting a moment, the forsaken sultana emitted a low growl.

"Heaven help me, I believe she's jealous," he exclaimed, as he saw her eyes harden again. "The soul of Virginia has passed into her body, there's no doubt about it."

The eagle soared out of sight into the blue, while the soldier gazed admiringly at the panther's sleek quarters. Every line of her body was instinct with youth and grace. She was as lovely as a woman. The tawny fur on her back was exquisitely shaded, till it melted into the soft white tones of her silken flanks. The brilliant sunshine, pouring down upon it, brought out all the lustre, all the indescribable charm, of that mantle of living gold with its flecks of black. The soldier and the panther looked at each other with mutual understanding. The lovely coquette quivered all over, when she felt her friend's finger-tips caressing her head; her eyes glittered like twin flashes of lightning; then she closed them tightly.

"She has a soul," he mused as he gazed at the desert queen in her repose. "It is as golden as the sands and as white; as solitary, and as ardent. . . ."

¶

"WELL," said the lady, "I have read your vindication of the brute creation. But how did it end, this friendship between two beings so well suited to each other?"

"Ah, there it is. It ended, like all great passions, in a misunderstanding. It is ever thus. One of them suspects the other of disloyalty. Neither will deign to explain, and they fall out from pure obstinacy."

"True, and it's sometimes at the most blissful moment of all," she replied. "One look, one word suffices. . . . But finish your tale."

"Here the story becomes—well—painful. As that old swashbuckler tossed off the last of the champagne, he exclaimed:

"'I don't know if I hurt her. Suddenly she turned on me, as if in a rage, and drove her sharp teeth into my thigh, though certainly not very violently. But I thought she was going to devour me, and I plunged my dagger into her neck. She rolled over with a cry that froze my heart. I watched her struggling. She gazed at me with not a hint of reproach in her eyes. I would have given everything in the world, including the Cross of the Legion of Honour which I had not yet won, to bring her back to life. I felt as if I had murdered a fellow creature. Some soldiers, who saw my flag, came hurrying to my rescue. They found me in tears.

"'Well, sir,' he resumed after a moment's silence, 'since then I have fought in Germany, Spain, Russia, France. I have trundled my old carcass about here, there and everywhere, but I've never seen anything to beat the desert. Ah, what a wonderful place it is!'

"'How did it affect you?'" I asked.

"'One can't put that sort of thing into words, young man. And you know I'm not always pining for my palm-grove and my panther. It's only when I'm down on my luck. In the desert, you see, there's everything and there's nothing.'

"'What do you mean by that?'"

"'Oh well,' he said with an impatient gesture, 'in the desert you have no mankind. You have only God.'"

The Humour of Things

A JOKE'S a very serious thing.—C. CHURCHILL.

ARGUMENT for a week, laughter for a month, and a good jest for ever.
—SHAKESPEARE.

LAUGH while you can. Everything has its time.—VOLTAIRE.

MAY those perish who have said our good things before us!
—DONATUS or ST. AUGUSTINE.

THE wise make jests and fools repeat them.—PROV.

The Signal

Self-sacrifice in darkest Russia

By VSEVOLOD MIKHAYLOVICH GARSHIN

Garshin, whose outbreaks of madness finally led to suicide, was one of the younger Russian authors. He wrote from deep and bitter experience of life, and though his output was comparatively small it established him none the less as a master of prose. His work is typically Russian, and "The Signal" is in marked contrast to Tchehov's "A Work of Art" which was published in last month's *Argosy*.—Ed.

SEMEN IVANOV was a watchman on a railway line. From his watch-house to the nearest stations it was twelve versts on one side and ten versts on the other. About four versts away a large mill had been started the year before, and its high, dark chimney could be seen beyond the wood; nearer than this, with the exception of watch-houses, there was no habitation.

Semen Ivanov was a sick and broken man. Nine years before he had served as orderly to an officer and had been through a whole campaign with him. He had been hungry and cold, he had been baked in the sun, he had marched forty or fifty versts in heat and frost, he had been under fire, but, thank God, not a bullet had grazed him. The regiment had been in the front line for a whole week, during which constant fire had been kept up between them and the Turks, who were on the other side of a little hollow; from morning till night the firing never ceased. Semen's officer was also in the front line. Three times a day Semen carried him his rations and a hot samovar from the regimental kitchen in a ravine. He had to cross an open space with the samovar, and the bullets whizzed around him and rattled on the stones. Semen was afraid and wept, but still went on. The officers were very pleased with him—they always had hot tea. He returned from the campaign uninjured, but he had pains in his arms and legs. Since that time he had suffered many misfortunes. He went home—his old father died, his four-year-old son died also, of a bad throat. Semen and his wife alone remained. The work on the land did not prosper—how could it?—with swollen hands and feet it is difficult to plough. At last they could no longer bear it in their village, and went to new places in search of happiness. Semen and his wife had looked for work on the railway, in Kharkov and on the Don. They had no luck anywhere. Then his wife went into service and Semen continued to wander about.

Once he had to travel by train; at one small station he looked out, and seemed to know the station master. Semen looked at him, the station master looked at Semen. They recognized each other; Semen had known the other as an officer in his regiment.

"You're Ivanov?" he asked.

"Just so, your honour, that's me."

"How did you get here?"

Semen told him all about it.

"Where are you going now?"

"I don't know, your honour."

"What do you mean, you fool, you don't know?"

"Just so, your honour, because I have nowhere to offer myself. I must go on looking for some sort of work, your honour."

The stationmaster looked at him, considered, and then said, "Look here, my friend; stay at the station for the time being. You are married, I think?

"Just so, your honour, I'm married. My wife is in Kursk, in service with a merchant."

"Well, then, write to your wife and tell her to come here. I will get her a free pass. One of our watchmen's houses will soon be vacant. I will speak to the chief of this section about you."

"I am much obliged, your honour," said Semen.

So he remained at the station. He helped in the station master's kitchen, chopped wood, swept the yard and the platform. In a fortnight his wife arrived, and Semen took their things to his watch-house on a handcart. The watch-house was new and warm; he could have as much wood as he liked, a small kitchen-

garden was left by the last occupant, and there was nearly half an acre of arable land beside the line. Semen was delighted.

He was given all that was necessary for his work; a green flag and a red flag, a lantern, a horn, a hammer, a wrench to tighten the nuts, a crowbar, a spade, a broom, bolts, and clasp hooks; he was also given two books—the rules and the time-table. At first Semen could not sleep at night—he was always studying the time-table; if a train were due in two hours he would go over his beat, and then sit down on the bench near his house and look and listen if the rails vibrated—if the sound of the train could not be heard. He learned the rules by heart, and though he could only read by spelling out each word, he managed to learn them all.

¶

IT was summer and the work was easy; there was no snow to clear away. There were but few trains on that line, so Semen passed along the verst in his charge twice a day, tightened a nut here and there, arranged the ballast, looked to the drain-pipes, and then returned to his house to occupy himself with the cultivation of his land. But in his home work there was one hindrance; whenever he wanted to do anything he had to ask permission of the road-master, who had to make a report to the chief of the section, and before his request was granted the time for doing the work was past. Semen and his wife began to feel dull.

About two months went by; Semen began to make friends with the neighbouring watchmen. One was a very old man; there was a perpetual rumour of his being replaced, for he could scarcely get out of his house; his wife used to look after the line for him. The other watchman, who was nearer to the station, was a thin and muscular young fellow. Semen first met him on the railway line just at the point where their two beats met. Semen took off his cap and bowed.

"Good health to you, neighbour," he said.

His neighbour looked at him sideways.

"How do you do?" he answered, and turning round went away. Some time after their wives met. Semen's Arina greeted the neighbour's wife; she also said only a few words and went away. Semen met her once and said, "How is it, young woman, that your husband is not talkative?" The young woman was at first silent, and then said: "And what is he to talk about to you? Each one has his own affairs. . . . Go your way in God's name."

However, before a month had passed they had made friends. When Semen and Vasili met on the railway line, they would sit down on the bank, light their short pipes, and tell each other how they lived. Vasili was more often silent, but Semen would tell of his native village and about the campaign.

"It's not a little trouble I've had in my life," he said, "and God knows it hasn't been a long one. God has not given me luck. Whatever luck the Lord dispenses, so must it be. That's how it is, brother, Vasili Stepanych."

Vasili Stepanych knocked the ashes out of his pipe on the rails and got up.

"It's not the luck God gives us that's against us, but men," he said. "There are no beasts of prey worse than men. Wolves don't eat wolves, but men will eat other men alive."

"Nay, brother, wolves do eat wolves, you can't deny!"

"The word came to my mind and I said it. All the same, there are no creatures more cruel. If it wasn't for man's wickedness and greediness one could live. Everyone waits for a chance to catch you alive, to snatch your last bite and devour it."

Semen reflected.

"I don't know, brother," he said. "Perhaps it is so, but if it is, then God ordained it."

"If that's so," Vasili answered, "then we have nothing more to say to one another. If we cast every injustice on God and only sit and suffer, we are not men but cattle. That's what I say!"

He turned round and went away without saying good-bye. Semen also got up.

"Neighbour, why do you swear at me?" he cried after him.

His neighbour did not turn round. Semen stood and looked after him until he was no longer seen in the hollow at the turning. Then he returned home and said to his wife: "Well, Arina, we've got a nice neighbour: he's not a man, he's a spiteful brute!"

However, they did not quarrel; they soon met again, and sat down and talked as before, always on the same subject.

"Well, my friend, if it were not for those

people, you and I would not be sitting in these watch-houses," said Vasili.

"What's the matter with the watch-houses? They're not so bad; you can live in them."

"You can live in them, you can live in them! That's what you say! You have lived long but gained little, looked long and seen little! What sort of life has a poor man in a watch-house, or anywhere else? They'll eat you alive, the blood-suckers! They'll squeeze the last drop of blood out of you, and when you get old throw you away, like offal only fit for swine! What wages do you get?"

"Little enough, Vasili Stepanovich; twelve roubles."

"And I get thirteen and a half. Now tell me why. By the rules of the company we ought all to get the same wage: fifteen roubles a month, and light and fuel. Who has ordered that we, you and I, should receive twelve roubles or thirteen and a half? First let me ask you that! And then you say one can live! You understand it's not a question of a rouble and a half, or even of three roubles—even if they paid us the whole fifteen! I was at the station last month when the director passed, and I saw him. He had all sorts of honours. There he was travelling in a special car: he got out and stood on the platform. . . . Well, I shan't stay here long; I'll follow my nose where it leads me!"

"Where will you go, Stepanych? Let well alone! Here you have a house, you are warm, you have a bit of land, and a wife who can work."

"A bit of land! You just look at my bit of land. There's not as much as a twig on it. Last spring I planted some cabbages. The roadmaster comes along: 'What's the meaning of this?' says he. 'Did you make an application? Did you get permission? Out with them this minute. Not a trace of them must remain!' He was drunk. Another time he would have said nothing, but his head was fuddled. . . . 'Three roubles fine!'"

Vasili smoked his pipe in silence and then said: "A little more, and I would have thrashed him to death."

"Well, well, neighbour, you're hot-headed, let me tell you!"

"I'm not hot-headed, I only think and speak the truth. He'll catch it from me yet. I'll complain to the chief of the section."

He did complain.

The chief of the section came to inspect the line. Three days later some important personages from Petersburg were expected to pass; an inspection of the line was made, as everything had to be put in order before they arrived. Ballast was added where necessary, and levelled up, the sleepers were examined, the ties tested with hammers, nuts screwed tighter, posts painted, and at the level crossings yellow sand strewn. The old watchwoman turned her old husband out to pull up the weeds. Semen worked hard for a whole week and got everything in order. He mended his *kaftan* and cleaned it, and as for his metal disk, he scrubbed it with brickdust till it shone brilliantly. Vasili worked hard too. The chief of the section arrived in a hand-car; four labourers were working the handles, the cog-wheels buzzed, the machine went at the rate of twenty versts an hour till the wheels groaned. It dashed up to Semen's watch-house. Semen ran out and made his report like a soldier. Everything was in order.

"How long have you been here?" asked the chief.

"Since the second of May, your honour."

"All right. Thank you. Who is at number one hundred and sixty-four?"

The roadmaster, who was with him on the hand-car, answered: "Vasili Spiridonov."

"Spiridonov, Spiridonov . . . ? Ah! Is it the same fellow who was reprimanded last year?"

"Yes, it's the same man."

"Ah well, we shall see. Get on."

The labourers began to work the handles and the hand-car started.

Semen looked after it and thought, "They'll have some fine fun with my neighbour!"

About two hours later he went his rounds. From the hollow he saw somebody walking along the line who seemed to have something white on his head. Semen looked more attentively—it was Vasili; he had a stick in his hand and a little bundle over his shoulder, and his cheek was tied up with a handkerchief.

"Where are you off to, neighbour?" Semen cried out to him.

Vasili came quite close; his face was distorted and as white as chalk and his eyes were wild; he tried to speak but his voice broke.

"I'm going to town, to Moscow, to the Board."

"To the Board . . . so, so! To complain, I suppose? Drop it, Vasili Stepanych, forget it!"

"No, brother, I shan't forget it. It's too late to forget. Just look, he struck me in the face—made it bleed. As long as I live I will never forget it, I will not leave it so!"

Semen took his arm.

"Leave it alone, Stepanych; it's the truth I tell you: you'll not mend matters!"

"Mend matters? I know very well I can't mend matters! It's true what you say about God's luck. I shan't make it better for myself, but one must stick up for the truth, old fellow."

"Just tell me how it happened."

"How it happened! He examined everything, got off the hand-car, and went into the house. I knew he would examine everything carefully, and I had put all in order, as it should be. He was just about to go when I made my complaint. He began to scream at me: 'This,' he said, 'is a government inspection, and you come with your complaints about a kitchen garden! This,' he said, 'is a matter for Privy Councillors, and you come worrying with your cabbages!' I could not resist saying a word—not very much, but it seemed to offend him—and he gave me one in the face; and I stood there just as if it ought to be like that! They drove away and I came to myself, washed my face, and started."

"How about the watch-house?"

"My wife is there. She'll see to it all right; the devil take them and their railway!"

Vasili got up and prepared to start.

"Good-bye, Ivanich. I don't know whether I shall get justice done me."

"You don't mean to go on foot?"

"I shall ask at the station to go on a goods train. I shall be in Moscow tomorrow."

The neighbours took leave of each other and Vasili started. For a long time he was not seen again. His wife did his work and did not sleep night or day. She wore herself out waiting for her husband. On the third day the inspector's train passed; there was an engine, a luggage van, and two first-class cars. Vasili was still not there. On the fourth day Semen met his wife, her face swollen with crying and her eyes red.

"Has your husband returned?" he asked.

The woman only waved her hand, said nothing, and went her own way.

SEMEN had learned as a boy how to make flutes of willow branches. He would press the heart out of the stick, bore holes where necessary and make a mouthpiece at the end, and do it all so well that you could play anything on it. He made a great many of these pipes in his spare time, sent them to town with the guard of a goods-train whom he knew, and got two copecks apiece for them at market. On the third day after the inspectors had passed by, he left his wife to meet the six o'clock evening train, and taking a knife went into the wood to cut sticks for his flutes. He got to the end of his beat, at the point where the line took a sharp turn, descended the embankment, and went into the wood. About half a verst farther on there was a large bog, and near it were to be found the best willow sticks for making flutes. He cut a whole bundle of them and turned to go home. He went through the wood; the sun was already low. There was dead silence; you could only hear the birds chirp and the rustle of the dry leaves underfoot. Semen went a little farther, nearly to the railway line; he seemed to hear a sound like the ringing of metal on metal. Semen walked faster. There were no repairs being made on that part of the line. "What can this mean?" he thought. He left the outskirts of the forest, and saw before him the railway embankment. On the railway line a man was squatting, engaged in something. Semen approached him quietly; he thought some one had come to steal the screw-nuts. Semen looked. The man rose; he had a crowbar in his hands, which he stuck under one rail, moving it a little to one side. It became dark in Semen's eyes; he wanted to shout but could not. He saw it was Vasili, and ran towards him as fast as he could, but Vasili, with his crowbar and wrench, rushed down the other side of the embankment.

"Vasili Stepanych! Old fellow! Brother! Come back! Give me the crowbar! Let's put the rail in place, nobody will know. Come back, save your soul from sin!"

Vasili did not come back, but went into the wood.

Semen stood before the detached rail, he had let his sticks fall. The train that was coming was not a goods but a passenger train. He had no means of stopping it, no flags. He could not replace the rail with his bare hands nor drive in the ties. He must run somewhere, he must certainly run to his house for implements. Lord, help us!

Semen ran towards his house gasping. He ran and thought every moment he would fall. He ran out of the wood; it was only a couple of hundred yards to his house. The siren sounded at the mill—it was six o'clock. At two minutes past six the train was due. Good Lord, save the innocent souls! Semen saw it all: the engine would catch its left wheels in the detached rail, tremble, heel over, tear up the rails, shiver the sleepers! Just there was the curve in the line; the embankment goes sheer down twenty-five yards, and there in the train—in the third-class car—women and little children crowded together. . . . There they all sit expecting nothing! Lord, teach me what to do!—No, there's not time to run to the house and run back, however fast you hurry . . .!

Semen did not run to the house, but went back, running faster than before. He ran almost unconsciously, not knowing what would happen next. He ran to the detached rail: there his sticks were lying in a heap. He stooped down, picked up a stick—he did not know why—and ran farther. He fancied he heard the train coming. He heard a distant whistle—the rails began to vibrate gently. He had no strength to run any farther; he stopped about two hundred yards from the place of danger. At that moment light seemed to come to his brain. He took off his cap, took out of it a cotton handkerchief, pulled his knife out of his high-boot, and crossed himself—"God bless me!"

He stuck the knife into his left arm above the elbow; the blood spurted out, flowing in a hot stream. He wetted his handkerchief with it, smoothed it, spread it out, tied it to his stick, and held it up—his red flag.

He stood there waving his flag; already he could see the train. The engine-driver did not see him; the train would come near, and in a couple of hundred yards one cannot stop a heavy train!

His blood flowed out more and more; Semen pressed the wound to his side, wishing to quench it, but the blood would not stop—the wound in the arm was deep. He felt giddy; black flies danced before his eyes . . . then it got quite dark . . . there was the sound of bells in his ears. He could not see the train nor hear its noise—he had but one thought in his mind: "I shall not be able to stand—I shall fall—I shall drop the flag—the train will go over me—help me, Good Lord, send relief . . .!"

His eyes grew dim, his mind became a blank, and he dropped the flag. But the bloody standard did not fall to the ground, somebody's hand caught it and held it high towards the approaching train. The engine-driver saw it, closed the valve, reversed the engine, and stopped the train.

The people jumped out of the cars, crowding together. They saw a man lying unconscious, covered with blood; another man stood near him with a bloody rag tied to a stick.

Vasili looked around him and bowed his head.

"Bind me," he said; "I unscrewed the rail."

The Grasshopper

O THOU that swing'st upon the waving hair
Of some well-filled oaten beard,
Drunk every night with a delicious tear
Dropt thee from heaven, where thou wert rear'd!

The joys of earth and air are thine entire,
That with thy feet and wings dost hop and fly;
And when thy poppy works, thou dost retire
To thy carved acorn-bed to lie.

Up with the day, the Sun thou welcom'st then,
Sport'st in the gilt plaits of his beams,
And all these merry days mak'st merry men,
Thyself, and melancholy streams.

RICHARD LOVELACE.

The Rebel

A battle-scarred cruiser's valedictory voyage

By "BARTIMEUS"

THEY lay where marsh, sea and sky merged into one grey monochrome broken only by the sails of passing barges. In that bleak desolation nothing happened through the interminable hours save the slow advance and retreat of the tide across the mud-flats; there was never a sound but the crying of the gulls.

The battle-cruiser was secured nearest to the sea, and she was the latest arrival. In creeks and backwaters as far as the eye could reach there were lines of destroyers moored bow to stern in pairs, a few light cruisers, a huddle of rusty submarines. Clear of the fairway in the main estuary the great guns of three monitors pointed dumbly at a couple of battleships, whose gunports and batteries were as empty as the eyeholes in a skull. The bitter wind that swept out of the north-east at dawn drove soapy flakes of scud back from the tide's advance, shrilled in the rigging of the empty ships, and went moaning through hatchways.

The forlorn destroyers stirred and twitched at their moorings.

"Greeting!" muttered an old flotilla leader. Her grey paint was disfigured with rust; her rail stanchions were bent, and the wire sagged along her foul deck; a rotted signal-halliard streamed out from her yard, cracking and snapping like a whip-lash. Only a few years before, the leader would have ignored the north-east wind; but in the condemned cell the visitation of even an erstwhile antagonist is welcome: "What's the news from the North Sea?"

"Nothing that would interest you," cried the wind. "The ships go to and fro unescorted: the fishing fleets are thick on the Banks, and they have nothing to fear but me. Rest in peace!"

A destroyer farther down the line winced and trembled against her fender. "Had Nimri peace . . . ? Blood-guilty! Blood-guilty!——" She was a comparatively new destroyer. That is to say she had been built and launched during the war, and in her first year of service had accidentally rammed a sister-ship in her own flotilla, cutting her in two. The catastrophe had affected her reason, and she now lay on the sale-list, brooding interminably over her brief and tragic career, a miserable, witless thing.

". . . Hither to torment us . . ." The sororicide rambled on in a dull monotone that sent a shiver through the tense hulls. The pitiless wind swept down the line, ruffling the surfaces of the puddles that lay on the rusting steel decks.

"Another dawn!" sighed one of the mine-sweepers from an adjoining backwater. Her battered gallows pointed upharbour where the sunrise was tinging the mist and smoke with sombre colour. "Who clears the fairways these days?"

"The fairways are clear," jeered the wind. "All clear from the Naze to the Lizard."

"The Pentland?" asked another. "Moray Firth—Tynemouth—the Swin?" She mouthed the old familiar names wistfully.

"They take too much on trust nowadays," chimed in one of the others. "I said so once before in '17, but nobody listened. 'All clear!' That was what the trawlers reported at sunset, but it cost us a light cruiser in the morning. Never trust a fairway till you've swept it—that's what I say."

"Which reminds me," began a neighbour. "Talking of the Swin——" and as the thawing dew dripped from rail and funnel-stay they settled down to their daily exchange of war memories like a row of Chelsea Pensioners sunning themselves on a bench.

In the meanwhile the wind had reached the battle-cruiser. She lay with a cable out on either quarter and bow, towering above the discoloured flood, a sullen brooding savage.

The lesser ships in that pitiable assemblage all greeted wind for old acquaintance' sake, but the battle-cruiser, who had always

scorned the north-east wind, remained haughtily indifferent. The wind thrummed softly in her tangled aerials and rigging, rustled along the ventilating shafts, and passed, sighing, through the armoured doorways. "Here I am!" whispered the wind; "I've come back to you."

The tide turned and the manacled giant stirred restlessly. The wind continued to finger shrouds and halliards, straying along the empty living spaces and stirring the dust on the bare mess tables. "I suppose you don't care—though the others are glad when I come. Don't you care a little, for the sake of old times—for the sake of the sound of gunfire I brought you—for the smoke-screen I laid—the mist I rent to give you clear range . . .?"

The battle-cruiser ground her cables in the hawse-pipes. "You brought me nothing I want reminding of here."

The wind caressed the gaunt axe-head bows with an icy touch. "I have missed you. I come from our hunting-ground—ours by right of conquest! Have you forgotten that everything that moved upon its surface did so by our tolerance? What are you doing here in this pitiable array?"

A rusty submarine, with the muddy waves chasing each other over her half-submerged tail, laughed weakly as she overheard the wind. "Did you hear that?" she murmured to the others. "Their tolerance, if you please! A noisy draught that wouldn't move a torpedo an inch in the tube, and a target we could have sunk at seven miles, calling the North Sea their hunting ground by right of conquest!"

But no answer came from the other boats. Their rudders and hydroplanes had rusted in the sockets, and they could no longer dive. A submarine left neglected dies very soon, and with the exception of the one that had spoken the spirit had fled from them all. Only surface ships can cling to life as long as they keep afloat.

The two pre-Dreadnought battleships that had been there longer than any of the other ships were instances of this longevity. Owing to the depth of water they were in, they were allowed to swing to the tides. With senile complacency they surveyed for the thousandth time the sorry pageant stretching away under the bleak skies to where the dockyard lay hidden in the mist. They had been there so long (the firm of ship-breakers that had bought them could not afford to tow them away) that they had forgotten the real reason why they were there at all. Battleships age very quickly.

"A pleasant morning for the review," mumbled one. "Is it to-day that the King comes?"

"I think not," replied the other. "I see no flags: the fleet is not dressed. It must be to-morrow. A brave gathering, is it not? What strides we make! I can remember—dear, dear! I can remember when we only possessed five submarines. And now, look over in yonder creek—they stretch as far as we can see!"

"My sight isn't what it used to be. The dear Prince used to stand on my bridge—I told you the Prince of Wales served on board me as a midshipman, did I not?—He used to stand on my bridge——"

"We've heard that story before," grunted one of the monitors irritably. Her sister, moored alongside, nudged her bulging side. "Hush! Let them alone. They're happy enough. They think they're here for a review."

"I'd give my billet in the finest review the world ever saw for another ten minutes' bombardment of the Belgian coast," muttered the third of the trio.

The depot-ship of the defence flotilla at the mouth of the estuary, her comely old sides shining with fresh paint, and her accommodation ladder scoured as white as ivory, joined in the talk. "Belgian coast! Forget it. I was at the Bombardment of Alexandria, but I'd rather be where I am to-day with my children round me. . . . Ah, believe me, hot blood cools! What will be, will be, and God is over all."

"Pious old fraud!" was the monitor's comment. "Nobody's going to turn *us* into fat depot-ships. We're for the knacker's yard. Forget the Belgian Coast? Not while a rivet holds two plates together. Hot blood cools, does it? I know somebody's blood that doesn't show much signs of cooling!" They all glanced covertly towards the battle-cruiser as she lay smouldering in impotent, sullen rage.

"Poor thing!" said the depot-ship. "She takes it hardly. But in a little while she will forget. . . . Time is a great healer. What will be, will be."

The battle-scarred giant broke silence. "Keep your pity for others—for these senile babblers and rusty cripples. They are content to wait like cattle to be towed out and torn plate from plate. Is that how Time heals, O Bombarder of Alexandria?

Hot blood cools for ever in the breaker's yard; is it for *that* men bid me wait in this sorry company, while the rust reddens on my decks and the weed grows fouler along my keel, tasting death between each dawn and sunrise through the endless years, until one day in mercy the tugs come . . . ?"

None answered her passionate outburst, but suddenly the wind, shrilling in the rigging, cried: "Look! Look up harbour, and see one about to taste man's mercy!"

Out of the haze veiling the distant dockyard came a Dreadnought. She passed slowly down the fairway in the wake of a pair of tugs, whose black smoke trailed to leeward like a pall. Gunless, stripped of boats and fittings, her topmasts struck, a certain pathetic dignity still clung to her.

The voice of the afflicted destroyer rose babbling to the sky: "Few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage. . . . Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear. . . . I did not strike the depth-charges—the depth-charges. . . . Thou art witness, O Lord, the loss of life was small. . . . How long, then, oh my God . . . ?"

"For pity's sake keep silence!" entreated the others, and the wails died away to incoherent mumbling as the Dreadnought approached the watching craft.

"Butchered to make a naval holiday!" observed one of the monitors, sententiously, and there was an oppressive silence until after the tow had disappeared in the sea haze.

"Well?" murmured the wind to the battle-cruiser. "Are you fain to wait for such an end as that?"

"By the God of Battles!" was the passionate reply, "Man shall not lay a finger upon me—man that made me: man that I served in the name of the King." The great superstructure, towering sixty feet above the water, trembled as she tugged unavailingly at her cables.

"I can show you the way to freedom," whispered the treacherous wind out of the north-east. "We twain are fitting mates, and I can give you again the freedom of the seas and power and dominion over them. Trust in me, and we will show man that the end is not yet."

II

ONE of the two pensioner ship-keepers on board the battle-cruiser looked up from his task of toasting a kipper before the fire in the admiral's day cabin as the door opened and his mate came in.

"Fair give you the 'orrors, don't she; a night like this?" The new-comer closed the door against a furious blast of icy wind; and carefully extinguished a hurricane lamp he was carrying.

The other, a stolid, thick-set figure wearing leather sea boots, with the firelight lighting up his heavy features, nodded. "Bower cable all clear for lettin' go the anchor?"

"All clear." The man addressed set the lamp on the table and stood warming his hands by the fire. His mate examined the kipper and turned it on the fork. "They didn't ought to leave us 'ere a night like this," pursued the speaker. "Them cables won't hold 'er, not if the wind backs with the ebb tide. Highest tide ever *I* see in this river."

"They couldn't send nothin' to take us off since sunset day before yesterday. It's been blowin' a full gale."

The man who had just entered stared absent-mindedly at the wavering flame of a candle stuck in an empty beer bottle on the littered oval table. He was tall and lean, with stooping shoulders; a goatee beard flecked with grey jutted out of the opening of a khaki "balaclava" that covered his head. The firelight threw his distorted shadow, in the semblance of a monstrous brooding bird of prey, across the curve of the after bulkhead. He appeared to be listening intently to the sounds that reached them through the closed mahogany door; the tumult of the wind howling through the empty shell of the ship, and the noise of the sea breaking against her side. "The 'oly 'orrors," he said, reverting to his first comment. The ship shuddered as if reeling under a titanic blow.

"Ain't you used to empty ships?" asked the stolid man, straightening up and placing the kipper on top of a pile of others on a plate. "By this time?"

"You walk forward 'tween decks," was the reply. "You'd think there was a whole ship's company there in the dark, ravin' an' cursin'. . . . I ain't a nervis man, not meself, or I'd never have took the job, but a night like this aboard this hooker fair beats 'aunted churchyards."

The stout man filled the teapot and moved heavily towards the table, carrying the plate of kippers. A sombre reflection in the mirror above the wide sideboard, sprang to sudden life.

"An' what's more," continued the thin man, gloomily eyeing the preparations for

the repast, "if it wasn't for my daughter Annie bein' musical an' wantin' a pianner on the 'ire purchase, I wouldn't stop aboard 'er another night."

The stolid man drew a stool up to the table and poured himself out a cup of tea. "It won't be your daughter Annie to say when you leaves this ship. This gale ain't goin' to blow itself out under a week. . . . 'Ear that?" A sudden sharp jar ran through the framework of the battle cruiser. "They never calkerlated on the tide risin' to this height when they laid out them four moorin's. There's a big sea runnin' an' she's bringin' up heavy against 'er cables."

"What's made the tide so high?" asked the thin man. He cut himself some bread and ate it, moving restlessly about the cabin. A dull reflection of his stooping figure moved stealthily to and fro in the mirror.

"North-easterly gale and spring tide. Piles up the water in the estuary. There's floods everywhere ashore. I see dead sheep an' pigs comin' down on this afternoon's ebb."

Again the table shook to the jar of the ship. The muffled sound of the sea breaking against the side changed to a more confused medley of noises. Tremor succeeded tremor in the ship's structure. "Tide's turned," said the stout man, speaking with his mouth full.

The tall man looked round the great shadowy cabin lit fitfully by the firelight and the single smoky candle. "It's snug in 'ere," he said, as if coming to the end of a train of thought. He accepted a cup of tea from his mate and held a punctured tin of condensed milk over it, watching the thin, yellowish stream that trickled into the cup.

"Drink that down," said the stout man. "We've got to get on deck." He rose, masticating, and taking a duffel coat off a hook on the bulkhead, drew it on, breathing heavily. About his throat he wound turn upon turn of a worsted comforter, and finally donned a battered sou'-wester. His movements were deliberate and methodical; having searched his pockets for matches and found them, he lit two hurricane lamps.

The thin man drank his tea with a gusty, sucking noise, keeping his eyes fixed on the wavering candle flame over the brim of his cup, as if mesmerized by it.

"Come on," said the man in sea boots, abruptly, and picking up one of the lamps, opened the door. A sudden draught swept in from the obscurity of the ship's interior, extinguishing the candle. The thin man, seemingly released from a spell, put down his cup with a clatter, seized the other lamp and followed his mate, closing the door behind him.

The darkness seemed to press forward against them; the empty spaces of the ship were reservoirs of blackness flowing upon them from all sides. Waves of gloom receded from the swaying lamps and rolled back like a heavy curtain behind them. The gale sighed and moaned through the empty compartments, gibbering in ventilating shafts with a horrid similitude of human voices. The wind-swept steel shell was bitterly cold.

The stout man led the way up a clattering steel ladder and stepped out on to the vast quarterdeck; after the thick darkness below, it was comparatively light in the open air. The steel rigging hummed on one deep continuous note as the gale tore through it; a loosened tarpaulin somewhere in the darkness flapped like the wings of a great bird struggling for freedom. The two men stepped over the hatchway coaming to feel the ship shudder from bow to stern. The shorter of the pair raised his stolid face to the sky where the clouds were racing past.

"As you said," he shouted to his companion. "Wind's backed to the west'ard." He put his hand on the other's rounded shoulder, bawling in his ear. "Backed to the west'ard with the ebb. . . . Can't hold 'er. . . . Bower anchor. . . ." The gale tore fragments of sentences from his lips and annihilated them. The thin man, staring to windward, steadied himself against the onslaught of the wind by holding on to a stanchion.

Without more ado the stout man suddenly bent forward and set off into the darkness at a shambling run. He shouted something, but the words were lost in the uproar of the wind. His swaying lantern danced like a will-o'-the-wisp along the upper deck and vanished behind a gun-shield.

"Cable's parted," muttered the other, and made off after his mate, his aggressive beard splayed out by the wind in the semblance of a shaving-brush. He clawed his way up the ladder to the forecastle in time to feel the ship jerk like an angry dog that has charged to the limit of its chain. He halted and stood irresolutely, peering; all of a sudden the wind, from blowing full in his face, was on his cheek; a distant anchor light on one of the craft moored up

harbour began to swing rapidly from right to left.

"There's the other bridle gone!" He swore under his breath and stumbled towards the gleam of the lantern in the bows. The stout man was bending over something on the deck; there was a clink of metal.

"Stand clear of the cable!" He guessed rather than heard the purport of the shout that barely reached him a couple of yards away; in the lantern light he saw the stout man step back and swing the iron maul. A sharp clang was succeeded by a deafening roar as the released anchor fell, dragging the cable thundering from the echoing depths of the ship. He dropped his lantern and made for the capstan and compression gear. The cable was bounding through the navel-pipe at a speed which warned him that the ship's bows, driven by wind and tide, were swinging rapidly across the fairway. The stupendous uproar, as the gigantic steel links rattled through the hawse, drowned even the howling of the gale. He was aware of the stout man at his side, striving to impart information between his cupped hands.

". . . Out to a clinch . . . broadside on . . . can't hold her . . . rockets——"

The sudden cessation of the thunderous vomiting of cable came with a jerk that shook the forecastle. There was an instant's renewal of the uproar and a comparative silence. "'Old on!" shouted the stout man. "That's the bower cable parted, an' I think one of the stern moorin's went same time. There's only one cable holdin', an' she ain't swung to that yet."

"Where's the rockets an' Very's pistol?" bellowed the other.

"Chart-'ouse." Without further parley the stout man set off again at his heavy shambling run, followed by his mate. Both lamps had been extinguished, and they felt their way by sense of touch up tier after tier of the ladder that led to the forebridge. The full force of the gale clawed at their garments and buffeted them against each other as they groped for the door of the chart-house; the stout man flung back the sliding panels and in the blackness of the musty-smelling interior could be heard gasping for breath and swearing. A match spluttered, flared up, and revealed the rockets on a shelf. He passed an armful out to his companion. "Go ahead—socket's on the lee rail." He struck another match and jerked open drawer after drawer in the chart-table, searching for the Very's pistol. As he found it the first rocket soared, curving upwards through the gale. Two followed in quick succession. He crammed a cartridge into the pistol and rushed to the rail.

"She's adrift!" screamed the thin man, preparing another rocket with shaking hands.

"Go easy with the rockets, then," was the reply. "We shall want 'em all before the night's out. Let's give 'em a Very's light." He raised the heavy brass pistol and fired into the howling darkness.

¶

THE wind carried the ball of white flame high over the estuary. The battle-cruiser's outline sprang into an instant's relief, funnels, turrets and superstructure suddenly assuming monstrous proportions out of the blackness of the night. The foam-streaked water stretched away under the momentary glare, as if viewed from the edge of a high cliff. The hulls of the moored battleships and monitors appeared to be receding swiftly. The Very's light reached the water and was extinguished. In the succeeding inky darkness the fury of the gale sounded redoubled.

"*Adrift in the fairway!*" yelled the thin man, as if trying to drive home some insistent point in an argument.

"Orl right! Not likely to be much traffic." The stout man retreated to the shelter of the chart-house and reloaded the pistol; apparently loth to be deprived of human companionship, the other joined him. "Wonder if she'll ground anywhere?" mused the stout man. "Top of the ebb; not likely." He sat down heavily on the settee with the air of a fatalist accepting the inevitable. In the comparative calm of the interior his laboured breathing sounded loud and painful.

"You ain't got a fill o' baccy, 'ave you?" he asked, presently.

"No," replied the thin man, and there was silence again, broken by the sound of heavy breathing.

"'Ow fast d'you reckon she's travellin'?" asked the thin man presently.

"Matter o' five knots—six, mebbe. I wish I 'ad a fill o' baccy."

The thin man picked up a rocket and vanished on to the bridge. A moment later his tall, stooping form again blocked the faintly perceptible oblong of the doorway. "The lightship!" he shouted.

The other was on his feet in an instant. "Eh? What about the lightship?"

"Bearing down on it. We're as likely to foul it as not." The speaker turned and vanished. A moment later another rocket spurted and fled hissing into the sky.

"Proper picnic!" The stout man clumped across to the rail, dragging the heels of his heavy boots as he walked. The distant scattered lights ashore showed that the battle-cruiser was drifting nearly broadside-on to wind and tide; on the lee beam two or three miles away, a white light swung patiently through its appointed arc, paused, and travelled back again.

In the confusion of the gale, the tumult of the wind-scourged sea and the sense of crazy helplessness as they drifted swiftly through the darkness, the measured wheeling of that beam of light seemed to the two men the only ordered thing in the Universe. They stared at it as if it offered a return to the accepted order of things, a promise of permanence and security. It grew rapidly closer, and the battle-cruiser, as if prompted to a purpose of incredible wickedness by the thin man's shout, slowly turned her bows towards it.

¶

ANOTHER rocket enveloped the masthead in a shower of stars. It appeared to galvanize the stout man into a sudden extraordinary fit of rage.

"Damn 'er," he roared. "We'll be adrift in the Channel sinkin' shippin' an' Gawd knows what in 'arf an hour. Fireworks won't 'elp 'em. There's an axe in the chart-'ouse. . . . We must light a flare top o' monkey's island. Paraffin's aft on the quarterdeck. There's a month's supply there for the lamps. Fetch it forward—fetch it forward while I get the axe." He rushed into the chart-house, and a moment later a rain of blows and the splintering of woodwork drove the meaning of his incoherences into the other's brain. A bonfire! That's what he meant! A bonfire to warn shipping. The thin man tumbled down the ladder as if hunted by the devil, and in a few minutes reappeared, panting, with a tin of paraffin. The stout man was still in the chart-house, wielding the axe as if possessed. "Pile it up topside an' set it alight," he shouted, flinging out fragments of chart-table, drawers and window frames. His frenzied energy inspired his companion. He staggered up the ladder to the compass platform under successive loads of wood which he flung in a heap and deluged with paraffin. The stout man joined him presently, axe in hand, his breath coming and going as if through a pair of leaky bellows. His transport of rage had passed as suddenly as it appeared.

"You didn't think to bring up my prick o' baccy, I s'pose, along o' the paraffin?"

"No," replied the thin man, on his knees by the pile of wood, fumbling with a box of matches. He looked up at the other and saw a pale illumination pass slowly over his shadowy outline. For a moment the stolid features were visible between the sou'-wester and the multiple folds of the comforter.

The lightship! For some obscure reason they had both forgotten the lightship. The thin man dropped the burning match into a pool of paraffin and sprang to his feet, gazing to leeward. Right ahead of them the beam of the light swung through its unhurried orbit. With a crackling roar the pile of varnished woodwork at their feet burst into a column of flame.

"She's goin' to do it! She means to do it!" bellowed the thin man, attributing for the first time deliberately malevolent intent to the inanimate steel structure adrift beneath their feet. "An' there's livin' men aboard of 'er."

"Gawd 'elp 'em, then. *We* can't do nothin'." The stout man stared with curious apathy at the approaching light. "Thirty thousand tons o' metal at five knots, bows-on. . . ." The wind tore at the pile of blazing woodwork and drew streamers of flame and sparks trailing to leeward; the smoke of the conflagration enveloped both men and drove them, coughing, down to the bridge.

"Come forward on to the forecastle an' bring a line," urged the thin man; "maybe we can save some of 'em." The possibility that the battle-cruiser might, after all, drift clear of the lightship had not seemed to occur to either. The stout man nodded, accepting the certainty of the catastrophe with dispassionate composure, as if he and the thin man had been contemplating its approach from another planet, infinitely remote.

The battle-cruiser, driven by the gale and swift currents, was travelling faster than either had estimated. The two men had barely reached the forecastle, carrying between them a coil of rope from the boat-deck,

when they saw the glare right ahead as if pivoted on the jack-staff. The blinding beam wavered in its swing and was suddenly extinguished. In a momentary lull in the gale they heard a splintering crash; the great lantern had fallen, as the lightship's mast went by the board, on the forecastle of the battle-cruiser.

The two men ran stumbling to where, amid a litter of wrecked metal, lay the shattered mirrors and lenses of the lantern. The thin man leaned over the rail, shouting vainly into the darkness. In the tumultuous sea below fragments of wreckage were dimly discernible drifting clear of the sheering bows, but no human voice answered the shouts. From first to last the wheeling light had been the only visible testimony to life on board the lightship.

The thin man turned to his stolid companion. "She's a murderess, this ship," he yelled. "That's what she is! She 'adn't no call to do that. . . . Sunk in their beds; men with wives an' families, same's you an' me. . . . Jest devilment—pure, bloody-minded devilment. . . ."

The effort to make himself heard above the wind exhausted the thin man; his voice cracked on a high falsetto note. One arm he had raised to gesticulate, dropped to his side; he thrust his goatee beard into the other's face. "An', what's more, she means to do for *us!*"

"I ain't afraid of 'er," shouted the stout man. "Let 'er wreck 'erself. Don't frighten me. Sit an' smoke my pipe till the lifeboat comes. She ain't goin' to sink." He turned and began to walk aft laboriously against the gale.

The flare on top of the chart-house still burned fiercely, vomiting clouds of sparks. They had the effect of again rousing the stout man into one of his abrupt unexpected passions. He pointed upwards at the flare.

"Don't matter about us—we can't come to no 'arm. Warn shippin'—that's what we've got to do. We're right in the traffic-way. . . . More wood! Side-screens—tarpaulins—anything that'll burn!" He lumbered, gasping, up the ladder. "*Mess stools!*" he roared at the other over his shoulder as he climbed. The thin man turned and fled into the darkness.

The gale veered again about midnight to the north-east, driving the battle-cruiser towards a rock-bound lee-shore; she drifted rapidly through the darkness like a citadel on the angry face of the waters; the wind made play with the flames that crowned her as if with a garland of leaping fire.

III

IN the pale winter sunlight the battle-cruiser lay aground on the isolated patch of rocks where the gale had hurled her. She had grounded on the top of one tide, and had been lifted higher by the succeeding one. The rocks had gnawed their way through her bottom plating, and held her beyond the power of man to refloat her. The seas had swept over her and battered in her scuttles; they had poured through hatchways and shell-gratings, flooding her engine-rooms, sluicing fore and aft the empty mess-decks, triumphing brutally at the last like a vengeful army after the fall of a long-beleaguered fortress.

The gale exhausted its fury at length, and as the sea calmed down, peace seemed to descend upon the stranded ship. Rust had covered her as white hairs are said to come in a night of mortal anguish, and the spindrift of the flying wave-crests glistened like hoar-frost about her upper works and turrets. Gulls sunned themselves on her listing forecastle, and sea-lice swarmed up over her plates to bask in the brief warmth of the winter days.

Man had disturbed her outwardly but little. A motor lifeboat had braved the gale and sent a line on board on a rocket, by means of which the two ship-keepers had been rescued from the control-top. They appeared little the worse for their adventure; one, a tall, gaunt man with an aggressive beard, seemed to have had small relish for his late abode—indeed, to cherish a peculiar animosity for her. Getting him into the lifeboat was like separating the combatants in a brawl; he barely waited until he was hauled inboard before he broke into a volley of invective, shaking a gnarled fist at the towering bulk over which the seas broke, slowly growing visible in the dawn. His companion, of a more stolid humour, lamented the loss of his sea boots (discarded for the transit), and borrowed a chew of tobacco from the lifeboat's coxswain before he wrung the water out of his clothes.

The weeks passed; dockyard tugs came out at low water and disembarked various officials and salvage experts on the slippery rocks; men walked round her and shook their heads. An adventurous bluejacket climbed up the length of broken cable that

dangled from a fairlead aft, and lowered a Jacob's ladder over her quarter. Men prowled about her interior and conferred amid the sodden litter in the admiral's cabin. They said the cost of salvage would be greater than her price on the sale-list. Gunnery experts sat astride her mammoth guns debating on her utility as a fleet experimental target. Working parties and floating cranes laboured round her at high water for a while, and finally, stripped to the steel shell, she was abandoned.

Thereafter succeeded utter peace. Night or day, storm or calm, ebb or flood, they were all alike to her. The rust on her plates reddened; the gulls, growing more confident as the weeks passed, collected in flocks about her decks. The sunken light-ship was replaced, and once every eleven seconds through the unnumbered night watches the beam of the distant light rested momentarily on the giant funnels and gaunt tripod masts that rose far above the surface of the sea.

Man her creator and master, man her slave and victim, had forsaken her. Then one sunny morning when the gulls were wheeling overhead, and the crisp, salt wind was drying the moisture of overnight on her rusting decks, a division of battleships came up-channel. They were very far away, and their smoke barely stained the clear sky as they passed in line ahead, turned in echelon, and recrossed the distant horizon. A yellow glare blinked from the leading ship and a dull concussion travelled faintly across the water.

The roar of a great explosion shook the battle-cruiser from end to end. Flame, smoke and debris leaped out of a great cavity where once the after-funnel had stood. The yellow flashes blinked all along the line; the rumble of gunfire rolled across the water, and amid a cloud of smoke and fragments of metal flying broadcast the foremast toppled slowly over. Salvo followed salvo; the wind that had been blowing lightly from the north-east died away. The smoke and fumes of the high-explosive covered the battle-cruiser as a sheet is drawn over the face of the dead.

Darkness succeeded the short winter day, and the passionless glare of the lightship's beam swung to and fro, illuminating every eleven seconds for a brief instant a heap of distorted metal work, about which the tide sobbed in unappeasable and subdued lamentation.

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DR. SEWARD'S DIARY.

JULY 20, 11 *p.m.*—I gave Renfield a strong opiate to-night, enough to make even him sleep, and took away his pocket-book to look at it. The thought that has been buzzing about my brain lately is complete, and the theory proved. My homicidal maniac is of a peculiar kind. I shall have to invent a new classification for him, and call him a zoophagous (life-eating) maniac; what he desires is to absorb as many lives as he can, and he has laid himself out to achieve it in a cumulative way. He gave many flies to one spider and many spiders to one bird, and then wanted a cat to eat the many birds. What would have been his later steps? It would be almost worth while to complete the experiment. It might be done if there were only a sufficient cause. Men sneered at vivisection, and yet look at its results to-day! Why not advance science in its most difficult and vital aspect—the knowledge of the brain? Had I even the secret of one such mind—did I hold the key to the fancy of even one lunatic—I might advance my own branch of science to a pitch compared with which Burdon-Sanderson's physiology or Ferrier's brain-knowledge would be as nothing. If only there were a sufficient cause! I must not think too much of this, or I may be tempted; a good cause might turn the scale with me.

How well the man reasoned; lunatics always do within their own scope. I wonder at how many lives he values a man, or if at only one. He has closed the account most accurately, and to-day begun a new record.

To me it seems only yesterday that my whole life ended with my new hope, and that truly I began a new record. So it will be until the Great Recorder sums me up and closes my ledger account with a balance to profit or loss. Oh, Lucy, Lucy, I cannot be angry with you, nor can I be angry with my friend whose happiness is yours; but I must only wait on, hopeless, and work. Work! work!

If I only could have as strong a cause as my poor mad friend there, a good, unselfish cause to make me work, that would indeed be happiness.

MINA MURRAY'S JOURNAL

July 26.—I am anxious, and it soothes me to express myself here; it is like whispering to one's self and listening at the same time. And there is also something about the shorthand symbols that makes it different from writing. I am unhappy about Lucy and about Jonathan. I had not heard from Jonathan for some time, and was very concerned; but yesterday dear Mr. Hawkins, who is always so kind, sent me a letter from him. I had written asking him if he had heard, and he said the enclosed had just been received. It is only a line dated from Castle Dracula, and says that he is just starting for home. That is not like Jonathan; I do not understand it, and it makes me uneasy. Then, too, Lucy, although she is so well, has lately taken to her old habit of walking in her sleep. Her mother has spoken to me about it, and we have decided that I am to lock the door of our room every night. Mrs. Westenra has got an idea that sleep-walkers always go out on roofs of houses and along the edges of cliffs, and then get suddenly wakened and fall over with a despairing cry that echoes all over the place. Poor dear, she is naturally anxious about Lucy, and she tells me that her husband, Lucy's father, had the same habit; that he would get up in the night and dress himself

and go out, if he were not stopped. Lucy is to be married in the autumn, and she is already planning out her dresses and how her house is to be arranged. I sympathize with her, for I do the same, only Jonathan and I will start in life in a very simple way, and shall have to try to make both ends meet. Mr. Holmwood —he is the Hon. Arthur Holmwood, only son of Lord Godalming—is coming up here very shortly—as soon as he can leave town, for his father is not very well, and I think dear Lucy is counting the moments till he comes. She wants to take him up to the seat on the churchyard cliff and show him the beauty of Whitby. I dare say it is the waiting which disturbs her.

July 27.—No news from Jonathan. I am getting quite uneasy about him, though why I should I do not know; but I *do* wish that he would write, if it were only a single line. Lucy walks more than ever, and each night I am awakened by her moving about the room. Fortunately, the weather is so hot that she cannot get cold; but still the anxiety and the perpetually being wakened is beginning to tell on me, and I am getting nervous and wakeful myself. Thank God, Lucy's health keeps up. Mr. Holmwood has been suddenly called to Ring to see his father, who has been taken seriously ill. Lucy frets at the postponement of seeing him, but it does not touch her looks; she is a trifle stouter, and her cheeks are a lovely rose pink. She has lost that anæmic look.

August 3.—Another week gone, and no news from Jonathan, not even to Mr. Hawkins, from whom I have heard. Oh, I do hope he is not ill. He surely would have written. I look at that last letter of his, but somehow it does not satisfy me. It does not read like him, and yet it is his writing. There is no mistake about that. Lucy has not walked much in her sleep the last week, but there is an odd concentration about her which I do not understand; even in her sleep she seems to be watching me. She tries the door, and, finding it locked, goes about the room searching for the key.

¶

AUGUST 6.—Another three days, and no news. This suspense is getting dreadful. If only I knew where to write to or where to go to, I should feel easier; but no one has heard a word of Jonathan since that last letter. I must only pray to God for patience. Lucy is more excitable than ever, but is otherwise well. Last night was very threatening, and the fishermen say that we are in for a storm. I must try to watch it and learn the weather signs. To-day is a grey day, and the sun as I write is hidden in thick clouds, high over Kettleness. Everything is grey—except the green grass, which seems like emerald amongst it; grey earthy rock; grey clouds, tinged with the sunburst at the far edge, hang over the grey sea, into which the sand-points stretch like grey fingers. The sea is tumbling in over the shallows and the sandy flats with a roar, muffled in the sea-mists drifting inland. The horizon is lost in a grey mist. All is vastness; the clouds are piled up like giant rocks, and there is a "brool" over the sea that sounds like some presage of doom. Dark figures are on the beach here and there, sometimes half shrouded in the mist, and seem "men like trees walking." The fishing-boats are racing for home, and rise and dip in the ground swell as they sweep into the harbour, bending to the scuppers. Here comes old Mr. Swales. He is making straight for me, and I can see, by the way he lifts his hat, that he wants to talk. . . .

I have been quite touched by the change in the poor old man. When he sat down beside me, he said in a very gentle way:

"I want to say something to you, miss." I could see he was not at ease, so I took his poor old wrinkled hand in mine and asked him to speak fully; so he said, leaving his hand in mine:

"I'm afraid, my deary, that I must have shocked you by all the wicked things I've been sayin' about the dead, and such-like, for weeks past; but I didn't mean them, and I want ye to remember that when I'm gone. We aud folks that be daffled, and with one foot abaft the krok-hooal, don't altogether like to think of it, and we don't want to feel scart of it; an' that's why I've took to makin' light of it, so that I'd cheer up my own heart a bit. But, Lord love ye, miss, I ain't afraid of dyin', not a bit; only I don't want to die if I can help it. My time must be nigh at hand now, for I be aud, and a hundred years is too much for any man to expect; and I'm so nigh it that the Aud Man is already whettin' his scythe. Ye see, I can't get out o' the habit of caffin' about it all at once; the chafts will wag as they be used to. Some day soon the Angel of Death will sound his trumpet for me. But don't ye dooal an' greet, my deary!"—for he saw that I was crying—"if he should come this very night I'd not refuse to answer his call. For life be, after all, only a waitin' for somethin' else than what we're doin'; and death be all that we can rightly depend on. But I'm content, for it's comin' to me' my deary, an' comin' quick. . . It may be comin' while we be lookin' and wonderin'. Maybe it's in that wind out over the sea that's bringin' with it loss and wreck, and sore distress, and sad hearts. Look! look!" he cried suddenly. "There's something in that wind and in the hoast beyont that sounds, and looks, and states, and smells like death! It's in the air, I feel it comin'. Lord, make me answer cheerful when my call comes!" He held up his arms devoutly, and raised his hat. His mouth moved as though he were praying. After a few minutes' silence, he got up, shook hands with me, and blessed me, and said good-bye, and hobbled off. It all touched me, and upset me very much.

I was glad when the coastguard came along with his spy-glass under his arm. He stopped to talk with me, as he always does, but all the time kept looking at a strange ship.

"I can't make her out," he said; "she's a Russian, by the look of her; but she's knocking about in the queerest way. She doesn't know her mind a bit; she seems to see the storm coming, but can't decide whether to run up north in the open, or to put in here. Look there again! She is steered mighty strangely, for she doesn't mind the hand on the wheel; changes about with every puff of wind. We'll hear more of her before this time to-morrow."

CHAPTER VII

CUTTING FROM "THE DAILYGRAPH," 8 AUGUST

(Pasted in Mina Murray's Journal)

From a Correspondent

Whitby.

ONE of the greatest and suddenest storms on record has just been experienced here, with results both strange and unique. The weather had been somewhat sultry, but not to any degree uncommon in the month of August. Saturday evening was as fine as was ever known, and the great body of holiday-makers set out yesterday for visits to Mulgrave Woods, Robin Hood's Bay, Rig Mill, Runswick, Staithes and the various trips in the neighbourhood of Whitby. The steamers *Emma* and *Scarborough* made excursions along the coast, and there was an unusual amount of "tripping" both to and from Whitby. The day was unusually fine till the afternoon, when some of the gossips who frequent East Cliff churchyard, and from that commanding eminence watch the wide sweep of sea visible to the north and east, called attention to a sudden show of "mares'-tails" high in the sky to the north-west. The wind was then blowing from the south-west in the mild degree which in barometrical language is ranked "No. 2: light breeze." The coastguard on duty at once made report, and one old fisherman, who for more than half a century has kept watch on weather signs from the East Cliff, foretold in an emphatic manner the coming of a sudden storm. The approach of sunset was so very beautiful, so grand in its masses of splendidly coloured clouds, that there was quite an assemblage on the walk along the cliff in the old churchyard to enjoy the beauty. Before the sun dipped below the black mass of Kettleness, standing boldly athwart the western sky, its downward way was marked by myriad clouds of every sunset-colour—flame, purple, pink, green, violet, and all the tints of gold; with here and there masses not large, but of seemingly absolute blackness, in all sorts of shapes as well, outlined as colossal silhouettes. The experience was not lost on the painters, and doubtless some of the sketches of the "Prelude to the Great Storm" will grace the R.A. and R.I. walls in May next. More than one captain made up his mind then and there that his "cobble" or his "mule," as they term the different classes of boats, would remain in the harbour till the storm had passed. The wind fell away entirely during the evening, and at midnight there was a dead calm, a sultry heat, and that prevailing intensity which, on the approach of thunder, affects persons of a sensitive nature. There were but few lights in sight at sea, for even the coasting steamers, which usually "hug" the shore so closely, kept well to seaward, and but few fishing-boats were in sight. The only sail noticeable was a foreign schooner with all sails set, which was seemingly going westwards. The foolhardiness or ignorance of her officers was a prolific theme for comment whilst she remained in sight, and efforts were made to signal her to reduce sail in face of her danger. Before the night shut down she was seen with sails idly flapping as she gently rolled on the undulating swell of the sea,

> "As idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean."

Shortly before ten o'clock the stillness of the air grew quite oppressive, and the silence was so marked that the bleating of a sheep inland or the barking of a dog in the town was distinctly heard, and the band on the pier, with its lively French air, was like a discord in the great harmony of nature's silence. A little after midnight came a strange sound from over the sea, and high overhead the air began to carry a strange, faint, hollow booming.

Then without warning the tempest broke. With a rapidity which, at the time, seemed incredible, and even afterwards is impossible to realize, the whole aspect of nature at once became convulsed. The waves rose in growing fury, each overtopping its fellow, till in a very few minutes the lately glassy sea was like a roaring and devouring monster. White-crested waves beat madly on the level sands and rushed up the shelving cliffs; others broke over the piers, and with their spume swept the lanthorns of the lighthouses which rise from the end of either pier of Whitby Harbour. The wind roared like thunder, and blew with such force that it was with difficulty that even strong men kept their feet, or clung with grim clasp to the iron stanchions. It was found necessary to clear the entire piers from the mass of onlookers, or else the fatalities of the night would have been increased manyfold. To add to the difficulties and dangers of the time, masses of sea-fog came drifting inland—white, wet clouds, which swept by in ghostly fashion, so dank and damp and cold that it needed but little effort of imagination to think that the spirits of those lost at sea were touching their living brethren with the clammy hands of death, and many a one shuddered as the wreaths of sea-mist swept

by. At times the mist cleared, and the sea for some distance could be seen in the glare of the lightning, which now came thick and fast, followed by such sudden peals of thunder that the whole sky overhead seemed trembling under the shock of the footsteps of the storm. Some of the scenes thus revealed were of immeasurable grandeur and of absorbing interest—the sea, running mountains high, threw skywards with each wave mighty masses of white foam, which the tempest seemed to snatch at and whirl away into space; here and there a fishing-boat, with a rag of sail, running madly for shelter before the blast; now and again the white wings of a storm-tossed sea-bird. On the summit of the East Cliff the new searchlight was ready for experiment, but had not yet been tried. The officers in charge of it got it into working order, and in the pauses of the inrushing mist swept with it the surface of the sea. Once or twice its service was most effective, as when a fishing-boat, with gunwale under water, rushed into the harbour, able, by the guidance of the sheltering light, to avoid the danger of dashing against the piers. As each boat achieved the safety of the port there was a shout of joy from the mass of people on shore, a shout which for a moment seemed to cleave the gale and was then swept away in its rush. Before long the searchlight discovered some distance away a schooner with all sails set, apparently the same vessel which had been noticed earlier in the evening. The wind had by this time backed to the east, and there was a shudder amongst the watchers on the cliff as they realized the terrible danger in which she now was. Between her and the port lay the great flat reef on which so many good ships have from time to time suffered, and, with the wind blowing from its present quarter, it would be quite impossible that she should fetch the entrance of the harbour. It was now nearly the hour of high tide, but the waves were so great that in their troughs the shallows of the shore were almost visible, and the schooner, with all sails set, was rushing with such speed that, in the words of one old salt, "she must fetch up somewhere, if it was only in hell."

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THEN came another rush of sea-fog, greater than any hitherto—a mass of dank mist, which seemed to close on all things like a grey pall, and left available to men only the organ of hearing, for the roar of the tempest, and the crash of the thunder, and the booming of the mighty billows came through the damp oblivion even louder than before. The rays of the searchlight were kept fixed on the harbour mouth across the East Pier, where the shock was expected, and men waited breathless. The wind suddenly shifted to the north-east, and the remnant of the sea-fog melted in the blast; and then, *mirabile dictu*, between the piers, leaping from wave to wave as it rushed at headlong speed, swept the strange schooner before the blast, with all sail set, and gained the safety of the harbour. The searchlight followed her, and a shudder ran through all who saw her, for lashed to the helm was a corpse, with drooping head, which swung horribly to and fro at each motion of the ship. No other form could be seen on deck at all. A great awe came on all as they realized that the ship, as if by a miracle, had found the harbour, unsteered save by the hand of a dead man! However, all took place more quickly than it takes to write these words. The schooner paused not, but rushing across the harbour, pitched herself on that accumulation of sand and gravel washed by many tides and many storms into the south-east corner of the pier jutting under the East Cliff, known locally as Tate Hill Pier.

There was of course a considerable concussion as the vessel drove up on the sand heap. Every spar, rope, and stay was strained, and some of the "top-hammer" came crashing down. But, strangest of all, the very instant the shore was touched, an immense dog sprang up on deck from below, as if shot up by the concussion, and running forward, jumped from the bow on to the sand. Making straight for the steep cliff, where the churchyard hangs over the laneway to the East Pier so steeply that some of the flat tombstones—"thruff-steans" or "through-stones," as they call them in the Whitby vernacular—actually project over where the sustaining cliff had fallen away, it disappeared in the darkness, which seemed intensified just beyond the focus of the searchlight.

It so happened that there was no one at the moment on Tate Hill Pier, as all those whose houses are in close proximity were either in bed or were out on the heights above. Thus the coastguard on duty on the eastern side of the harbour, who at once ran down to the little pier, was the first to climb on board. The men working the searchlight, after scouring the entrance of the harbour without seeing anything, then turned the light on the derelict and kept it there. The coastguard ran aft, and when he came beside the wheel, bent over to examine it, and recoiled at once as though under some sudden emotion. This seemed to pique the general curiosity, and quite a number of people began to run. It is a good way round from the West Cliff by the Drawbridge to Tate Hill Pier, but your correspondent is a fairly good runner, and came well ahead of the crowd. When I arrived, however, I found already assembled on the pier a crowd, whom the coastguard and police refused to allow to come on board. By the courtesy of the chief boatman, I was, as your correspondent, permitted to climb on deck, and was one of a small group who saw the dead seaman whilst actually lashed to the wheel.

It was no wonder that the coastguard was surprised, or even awed, for not often can such

a sight have been seen. The man was simply fastened by his hands, tied one over the other, to a spoke of the wheel. Between the inner hand and the wood was a crucifix, the set of beads on which it was fastened being around both wrists and wheel, and all kept fast by the binding cords. The poor fellow may have been seated at one time, but the flapping and buffeting of the sails had worked through the rudder of the wheel and dragged him to and fro, so that the cords with which he was tied had cut the flesh to the bone. Accurate note was made of the state of things, and a doctor—Surgeon J. M. Caffyn, of 33, East Elliot Place—who came immediately after me, declared, after making examination, that the man must have been dead for quite two days. In his pocket was a bottle, carefully corked, empty save for a little roll of paper, which proved to be the addendum to the log. The coastguard said the man must have tied up his own hands, fastening the knots with his teeth. The fact that a coastguard was the first on board may save some complications, later on, in the Admiralty Court; for the coastguards cannot claim the salvage which is the right of the first civilian entering on a derelict. Already, however, the legal tongues are wagging, and one young law student is loudly asserting that the rights of the owner are already completely sacrificed, his property being held in contravention of the statutes of mortmain, since the tiller, as emblemship, if not proof, of delegated possession, is held in a *dead hand*. It is needless to say that the dead steersman has been reverently removed from the place where he held his honourable watch and ward till death—a steadfastness as noble as that of the young Casabianca—and placed in the mortuary to await inquest.

Already the sudden storm is passing, and its fierceness is abating; the crowds are scattering homewards, and the sky is beginning to redden over the Yorkshire wolds. I shall send, in time for your next issue, further details of the derelict ship which found her way so miraculously into harbour in the storm.

Whitby.

AUGUST 9.—The sequel to the strange arrival of the derelict in the storm last night is almost more startling than the thing itself. It turns out that the schooner is a Russian from Varna, and is called the *Demeter*. She is almost entirely in ballast of silver sand, with only a small amount of cargo—a number of great wooden boxes filled with mould. This cargo was consigned to a Whitby solicitor, Mr. S. F. Billington, of 7, The Crescent, who this morning went aboard and formally took possession of the goods consigned to him. The Russian consul, too, acting for the charter-party, took formal possession of the ship, and paid all harbour dues, etc. Nothing is talked about here to-day except the strange coincidence; the officials of the Board of Trade have been most exacting in seeing that every compliance has been made with existing regulations. As the matter is to be a "nine days' wonder," they are evidently determined that there shall be no cause for after complaint. A good deal of interest was abroad concerning the dog which landed when the ship struck, and more than a few of the members of the S.P.C.A., which is very strong in Whitby, have tried to befriend the animal. To the general disappointment, however, it was not to be found; it seems to have disappeared entirely from the town. It may be that it was frightened and made its way on to the moors, where it is still hiding in terror. There are some who look with dread on such a possibility, lest later on it should in itself become a danger, for it is evidently a fierce brute. Early this morning a large dog, a half-bred mastiff, belonging to a coal merchant close to Tate Hill Pier, was found dead in the roadway opposite its master's yard. It had been fighting, and manifestly had had a savage opponent, for its throat was torn away, and its belly was slit open as if with a savage claw.

Later.—By the kindness of the Board of Trade inspector, I have been permitted to look over the log-book of the *Demeter*, which was in order up to within three days, but contained nothing of special interest except as to facts of missing men. The greater interest, however, is with regard to the paper found in the bottle, which was to-day produced at the inquest; and a more strange narrative than the two between them unfold it has not been my lot to come across. As there is no motive for concealment, I am permitted to use them, and accordingly send you a rescript, simply omitting technical details of seamanship and supercargo. It almost seems as though the captain had been seized with some kind of mania before he had got well into blue water, and that this had developed persistently throughout the voyage. Of course my statement must be taken *cum grano*, since I am writing from the dictation of a clerk of the Russian consul, who kindly translated for me, time being short.

Log of the "Demeter":

Varna to Whitby

Written July 18, things so strange happening, that I shall keep accurate note henceforth till we land.

On July 6 we finished taking in cargo, silver sand and boxes of earth. At noon set sail. East wind, fresh. Crew, five hands . . . two mates, cook, and myself (captain).

On July 11 at dawn entered Bosphorus. Boarded by Turkish Customs officers. Baksheesh. All correct. Under way at 4 P.M.

On July 12 through Dardanelles. More Customs officers and flagboat of guarding squadron. Baksheesh again. Work of officers thorough, but quick. Want us off soon. At dark passed into Archipelago.

On July 13 passed Cape Matapan. Crew dissatisfied about something. Seemed scared, but would not speak out.

On July 14 was somewhat anxious about crew. Men all steady fellows, who sailed with me before. Mate could not make out what was wrong; they only told him there was *something*, and crossed themselves. Mate lost temper with one of them that day and struck him. Expected fierce quarrel, but all was quiet.

On July 16 mate reported in the morning that one of crew, Petrofsky, was missing. Could not account for it. Took larboard watch eight bells last night; was relieved by Abramoff, but did not go to bunk. Men more downcast that ever. All said they expected something of the kind, but would not say more than that there was *something* aboard. Mate getting very impatient.

On July 17, yesterday, one of the men, Olgaren, came to my cabin, and in an awestruck way confided to me that he thought there was a strange man aboard the ship. He said that in his watch he had been sheltering behind the deckhouse, as there was a rain-storm, when he saw a tall, thin man, who was not like any of the crew, come up the companion way, and go along the deck forward, and disappear. He followed cautiously, but when he got to bows found no one and the hatchways were all closed. He was in a panic of superstitious fear, and I am afraid the panic may spread. To allay it, I shall to-day search entire ship carefully from stem to stern.

Later in the day I got together the whole crew, and told them, as they evidently thought there was some one in the ship, we would search from stem to stern. First mate angry; said it was folly, and to yield to such foolish ideas would demoralize the men; said he would engage to keep them out of trouble with a handspike. I let him take the helm, while the rest began thorough search, all keeping abreast, with lanterns; we left no corner unsearched. As there were only the big wooden boxes, there were no odd corners where a man could hide. Men much relieved when search over, and went back to work cheerfully. First mate scowled.

July 22.—Rough weather last three days, and all hands busy with sails—no time to be frightened. Men seem to have forgotten their dread. Mate cheerful again, and all on good terms. Praised men for work in bad weather. Passed Gibraltar and out through Straits. All well.

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JULY 24.—There seems some doom over this ship. Already a hand short, and entering on the Bay of Biscay with wild weather ahead, and last night yet another man lost—disappeared. Like the first, he came off his watch and was not seen again. Men all in a panic of fear; sent a round robin, asking to have double watch, as they fear to be alone. Mate violent. Fear there will be some trouble, as either he or the men will do some violence.

July 28.—Four days in hell, knocking about in a sort of maelstrom, and the wind a tempest. No sleep for any one. Men all worn out. Hardly know how to set a watch, since no one fit to go on. Second made volunteered to steer and watch, and let men snatch a few hours' sleep. Wind abating; seas still terrific, but feel them less, as ship is steadier.

July 29.—Another tragedy. Had single watch to-night, as crew too tired to double. When morning watch came on deck could find no one except steersman. Raised outcry, and all came on deck. Thorough search, but no one found. Are now without second mate and crew in a panic. Mate and I agreed to go armed henceforth and wait for any sign of cause.

July 30.—Last night. Rejoiced we are nearing England. Weather fine, all sails set. Retired worn out; slept soundly; awaked by mate telling me that both man of watch and steersman missing. Only self and mate and two hands left to work ship.

August 1.—Two days of fog, and not a sail sighted. Had hoped when in the English Channel to be able to signal for help or get in somewhere. Not having power to work sails have to run before wind. Dare not lower, as could not raise them again. We seem to be drifting to some terrible doom. Mate now more demoralized than either of men. His stronger nature seems to have worked inwardly against himself. Men are beyond fear, working stolidly and patiently, with minds made up to worst. They are Russian, he Roumanian.

August 2, *midnight*.—Woke up from few minutes' sleep by hearing a cry, seemingly outside my port. Could see nothing in fog. Rushed on deck, and ran against mate. Tells me heard cry and ran, but no sign of man on watch. One more gone. Lord, help us! Mate says we must be past Straits of Dover, as in a moment of fog lifting he saw North Foreland just as he heard the man cry out. If so we are now off in the North Sea, and only God can guide us in the fog, which seems to move with us; and God seems to have deserted us.

August 3.—At midnight I went to relieve the man at the wheel, but when I got to it found no one there. The wind was steady, and as we ran before it there was no yawing. I dared not leave it, so shouted for the mate. After a few seconds he rushed up on deck in his flannels. He looked wild-eyed and haggard, and I greatly fear his reason has given way. He came close to me and whispered hoarsely, with his mouth to my ear, as though fearing the very air might hear: "*It* is here; I know it, now. On the watch last night I know It, like a man, tall and thin, and ghastly pale. It was in the bows, and looking out. I crept behind It, and gave It my knife; but the knife went through It, empty as the air." And as he spoke he took his knife and drove it savagely into space. Then he went on: "But It is here, and I'll find It.

It is in the hold, perhaps, in one of those boxes. I'll unscrew them one by one and see. You work the helm." And, with a warning look and his finger on his lip, he went below. There was a choppy wind springing up, and I could not leave the helm. I saw him come out on deck again with a tool-chest and a lantern, and go down the forward hatchway. He is mad, stark, raving mad, and it's no use my trying to stop him. He can't hurt those big boxes: they are invoiced as "clay," and to pull them about is as harmless a thing as he can do. So here I stay, and mind the helm, and write these notes. I can only trust in God and wait till the fog clears. Then, if I can't steer to any harbour with the wind that is, I shall cut down sails and lie by, and signal for help. . . .

It is nearly all over now. Just as I was beginning to hope that the mate would come out calmer—for I heard him knocking away at something in the hold, and work is good for him—there came up the hatchway a sudden, startled scream, which made my blood run cold, and up on the deck he came as if shot from a gun—a raging madman, with his eyes rolling and his face convulsed with fear. "Save me! save me!" he cried, and then looked round on the blanket of fog. His horror turned to despair, and in a steady voice he said: "You had better come too, captain, before it is too late. *He* is there. I know the secret now. The sea will save me from Him, and it is all that is left!" Before I could say a word, or move forward to seize him, he sprang on the bulwark and deliberately threw himself into the sea. I suppose I know the secret, too, now. It was this madman who had got rid of the men one by one, and now he has followed them himself. God help me! How am I to account for all these horrors when I get to port?

August 4.—Still fog, which the sunrise cannot pierce. I know there is sunrise because I am a sailor, why else I know not. I dared not go below, I dared not leave the helm; so here all night I stayed, and in the dimness of the night I saw It—Him! God forgive me, but the mate was right to jump overboard. It is better to die like a man; to die like a sailor in blue water no man can object. But I am captain, and I must not leave my ship. But I shall baffle this fiend or monster, for I shall tie my hands to the wheel when my strength begins to fail and along with them I shall tie that which He—It!—dare not touch; and then, come good wind or foul, I shall save my soul, and my honour as a captain. I am growing weaker, and the night is coming on. If He can look me in the face again, I may not have time to act. . . . If we are wrecked, mayhap this bottle may be found, and those who find it may understand; if not . . . well, then all men shall know that I have been true to my trust. God and the Blessed Virgin and the saints help a poor ignorant soul trying to do his duty. . . .

Of course the verdict was an open one. There is no evidence to adduce; and whether or not the man himself committed the murders there is now none to say. The folk here hold almost universally that the captain is simply a hero, and he is to be given a public funeral. Already it is arranged that his body is to be taken with a train of boats up the Esk for a piece and then brought back to Tate Hill Pier and up the Abbey steps; for he is to be buried in the churchyard on the cliff. The owners of more than a hundred boats have already given in their names as wishing to follow him to the grave.

No trace has ever been found of the great dog; at which there is much mourning, for, with public opinion in its present state, he would, I believe, be adopted by the town. To-morrow will see the funeral; and so will end this one more "mystery of the sea."

Mina Murray's Journal

August 8.—Lucy was very restless all night, and I, too, could not sleep. The storm was fearful, and as it boomed loudly among the chimney-pots, it made me shudder. When a sharp puff came it seemed to be like a distant gun. Strangely enough, Lucy did not wake; but she got up twice and dressed herself. Fortunately, each time I awoke in time, and managed to undress her without waking her, and got her back to bed. It is very strange a thing, this sleep-walking, for as soon as her will is thwarted in any physical way, her intention, if there be any, disappears, and she yields herself almost exactly to the routine of her life.

Early in the morning we both got up and went down to the harbour to see if anything had happened in the night. There were very few people about, and though the sun was bright, and the air clear and fresh, the big, grim-looking waves, that seemed dark themselves because the foam that topped them was like snow, forced themselves in through the narrow mouth of the harbour—like a bullying man going through a crowd. Somehow I felt glad that Jonathan was not on the sea last night, but on land. But, oh, is he on land or sea? Where is he, and how? I am getting fearfully anxious about him. If only I knew what to do, and could do anything!

August 10.—The funeral of the poor sea-captain to-day was most touching. Every boat in the harbour seemed to be there, and the coffin was carried by captains all the way from Tate Hill Pier up to the churchyard. Lucy came with me, and we went early to our old seat, whilst the cortège of boats went up the river to the Viaduct and came down again. We had a lovely view, and saw the procession nearly all the way. The poor fellow was laid to rest quite near our seat, so that we stood on it when the time came and saw everything. Poor Lucy seemed much upset. She was restless and

uneasy all the time, and I cannot but think that her dreaming at night is telling on her. She is quite odd in one thing: she will not admit to me that there is any cause for restlessness; or if there be, she does not understand it herself. There is an additional cause in that poor old Mr. Swales was found dead this morning on our seat, his neck being broken. He had evidently, as the doctor said, fallen back in the seat in some sort of fright, for there was a look of fear and horror on his face that the men said made them shudder. Poor dear old man! Perhaps he had seen Death with his dying eyes! Lucy is so sweet and sensitive that she feels influences more acutely than other people do. Just now she was quite upset by a little thing which I did not much heed, though I am myself very fond of animals. One of the men who come up here often to look for the boats was followed by his dog. The dog is always with him. They are both quiet persons, and I never saw the man angry, nor heard the dog bark. During the service the dog would not come to its master, who was on the seat with us, but kept a few yards off, barking and howling. Its master spoke to it gently, and then harshly, and then angrily; but it would neither come nor cease to make a noise. It was in a sort of fury, with its eyes savage, and all its hairs bristling out like a cat's tail when puss is on the war-path. Finally the man, too, got angry, and jumped down and kicked the dog, and then took it by the scruff of the neck and half dragged and half threw it on the tombstone on which the seat is fixed. The moment it touched the stone the poor thing became quiet and fell all into a tremble. It did not try to get away, but crouched down, quivering and cowering, and was in such a pitiable state of terror that I tried, though without effect, to comfort it. Lucy was full of pity, too, but she did not attempt to touch the dog, but looked at it in an agonized sort of way. I greatly fear that she is of too super-sensitive a nature to go through the world without trouble. She will be dreaming of this to-night, I am sure. The whole agglomeration of things—the ship steered into port by a dead man; his attitude, tied to a wheel with a crucifix and beads; the touching funeral; the dog, now furious and now in terror—will all afford material for her dreams.

I think it will be best for her to go to bed tired out physically, so I shall take her for a long walk by the cliffs to Robin Hood's Bay and back. She ought not to have much inclination for sleep-walking then.

CHAPTER VIII

Mina Murray's Journal

SAME day, 11 o'clock p.m.—Oh, but I am tired! If it were not that I have made my diary a duty I should not open it to-night. We had a lovely walk. Lucy, after a while, was in gay spirits, owing, I think, to some dear cows who came nosing towards us in a field close to the lighthouse, and frightened the wits out of us. I believe we forgot everything, except, of course, personal fear, and it seemed to wipe the slate clean and give us a fresh start. We had a capital "severe tea" at Robin Hood's Bay in a sweet little old-fashioned inn, with a bow-window right over the seaweed-covered rocks of the strand. I believe we should have shocked the "New Woman" with our appetites. Men are more tolerant, bless them! Then we walked home with some, or rather many, stoppages to rest, and with our hearts full of a constant dread of wild bulls. Lucy was really tired, and we intended to creep off to bed as soon as we could. The young curate came in, however, and Mrs. Westenra asked him to stay for supper. Lucy and I had both a fight for it with the dusty miller; I know it was a hard fight on my part, and I am quite heroic. I think that some day the bishops must get together and see about breeding up a new class of curates, who don't take supper, no matter how they may be pressed to, and who will know when girls are tired. Lucy is asleep and breathing softly. She has more colour in her cheeks than usual, and looks, oh, so sweet. If Mr. Holmwood fell in love with her seeing her only in the drawing-room, I wonder what he would say if he saw her now. Some of the "New Woman" writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I suppose the New Woman won't condescend in future to accept; she will do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it, too! There's some consolation in that. I am so happy to-night, because dear Lucy seems better. I really believe she has turned the corner, and that we are over her troubles with dreaming. I should be quite happy if I only knew if Jonathan. . . . God bless and keep him.

August 11, 3 *a.m.*—Diary again. No sleep now, so I may as well write. I am too agitated to sleep. We have had such an adventure, such an agonizing experience. I fell asleep as soon as I had closed my diary. . . . Suddenly I became broad awake, and sat up, with a horrible sense of fear upon me, and of some feeling of emptiness around me. The room was dark, so I could not see Lucy's bed; I stole across and felt for her. The bed was empty. I lit a match, and found that she was not in the room. The door was shut, but not locked, as I had left it. I feared to wake her mother, who has been more than usually ill lately, so threw on some clothes and got ready to look for her. As I was leaving the room it struck me that the clothes she wore might give me some clue as to her dreaming intention. Dressing-gown would mean house; dress, outside. Dressing-gown and dress were both in their places. "Thank God," I said to

myself, " she cannot be far, as she is only in her nightdress." I ran downstairs and looked in the sitting-room. Not there ! Then I looked in all the other open rooms of the house, with an ever-growing fear chilling my heart. Finally I came to the hall-door and found it open. It was not wide open, but the catch of the lock had not caught. The people of the house are careful to lock the door every night, so I feared that Lucy must have gone out as she was. There was no time to think of what might happen ; a vague, overmastering fear obscured all details. I took a big, heavy shawl and ran out. The clock was striking one as I was in the Crescent, and there was not a soul in sight. I ran along the North Terrace but could see no sign of the white figure which I expected. At the edge of the West Cliff above the Pier I looked across the harbour to the East Cliff, in the hope or fear—I don't know which—of seeing Lucy in our favourite seat. There was a bright full moon, with heavy black, driving clouds, which threw the whole scene into a fleeting diorama of light and shade as they sailed across. For a moment or two I could see nothing, as the shadow of a cloud obscured St. Mary's Church and all around it. Then as the cloud passed I could see the ruins of the Abbey coming into view ; and as the edge of a narrow band of light as sharp as a sword-cut moved along, the church and the churchyard became gradually visible. Whatever my expectation was, it was not disappointed, for there, on our favourite seat, the silver light of the moon struck a half-reclining figure, snowy white. The coming of the cloud was too quick for me to see much, for shadow shut down on light almost immediately ; but it seemed to me as though something dark stood behind the seat where the white figure shone, and bent over it. What it was, whether man or beast, I could not tell ; I did not wait to catch another glance, but flew down the steep steps to the pier and along by the fish-market to the bridge, which was the only way to reach the East Cliff. The town seemed as dead, for not a soul did I see. I rejoiced that it was so, for I wanted no witness of poor Lucy's condition. The time and distance seemed endless, and my knees trembled and my breath came laboured as I toiled up the endless steps to the Abbey. I must have gone fast, and yet it seemed to me as if my feet were weighted with lead, and as though every joint in my body were rusty. When I got almost to the top I could see the seat and the white figure, for I was now close enough to distinguish it even through the spells of shadow. There was undoubtedly something, long and black, bending over the half-reclining white figure. I called in fright, " Lucy ! Lucy ! " and something raised a head, and from where I was I could see a white face and red, gleaming eyes. Lucy did not answer, and I ran on to the entrance of the churchyard. As I entered the church was between me and the seat, and for a minute or so I lost sight of her. When I came in view again the cloud had passed, and the moonlight struck so brilliantly that I could see Lucy half-reclining with her head lying over the back of the seat. She was quite alone, and there was not a sign of any living thing about.

When I bent over her I could see that she was still asleep. Her lips were parted, and she was breathing—not softly, as usual with her, but in long, heavy gasps, as though striving to get her lungs full at every breath. As I came close, she put up her hand in her sleep and pulled the collar of her nightdress close round her throat. Whilst she did so there came a little shudder through her, as though she felt the cold. I flung the warm shawl over her, and drew the edges tight round her neck, for I dreaded lest she should get some deadly chill from the night air, unclad as she was. I feared to wake her all at once, so, in order to have my hands free that I might help her, I fastened the shawl at her throat with a big safety-pin ; but I must have been clumsy in my anxiety and pinched or pricked her with it, for by and by, when her breathing became quieter, she put her hand to her throat again and moaned. When I had her carefully wrapped up I put my shoes on her feet, and then began very gently to wake her. At first she did not respond ; but gradually she became more and more uneasy in her sleep, moaning and sighing occasionally. At last, as time was passing fast, and, for many other reasons, I wished to get her home at once, I

A Fable

HE was a grey animal, and his crooked legs were so ill balanced that he had the grace of a rhinoceros.

His ears were awry. They stood not like sentries on guard, but like lazy tramps with no purpose in the world.

As his masters, with loaded guns, drove him through the market place he heard a great noise and shoutings of adulation.

"They are admiring me," he thought. "See how they rush out of their houses and gaze at me. How wonderful, how powerful am I!"

And though his masters thwacked him violently he did not murmur, but rolled his eye (for he had lost the other) at the populace.

"What homage they pay me!" he said to himself.

Upon his back hung two baskets laden with precious relics. The crowds were admiring these things; but the animal did not know it.

You see, he was an ass. He was dressed in a little brief authority.

shook her more forcibly, till finally she opened her eyes and awoke. She did not seem surprised to see me, as, of course, she did not realize all at once where she was. Lucy always wakes prettily, and even at such a time, when her body must have been chilled with cold, and her mind somewhat appalled at waking unclad in a churchyard at night, she did not lose her grace. She trembled a little, and clung to me; when I told her to come at once with me home she rose without a word, with the obedience of a child. As we passed along, the gravel hurt my feet, and Lucy noticed me wince. She stopped and wanted to insist upon my taking my shoes; but I would not. However, when we got to the pathway outside the churchyard, where there was a puddle of water remaining from the storm, I daubed my feet with mud, using each foot in turn on the other, so that as we went home no one, in case we should meet any one, should notice my bare feet.

¶

FORTUNE favoured us, and we got home without meeting a soul. Once we saw a man, who seemed not quite sober, passing along a street in front of us; but we hid in a door till he had disappeared up an opening such as there are here, steep little closes, or "wynds," as they call them in Scotland. My heart beat so loud all the time that sometimes I thought I should faint. I was filled with anxiety about Lucy, not only for her health, lest she should suffer from the exposure, but for her reputation in case the story should get wind. When we got in, and had washed our feet, and had said a prayer of thankfulness together, I tucked her into bed. Before falling asleep she asked—even implored—me not to say a word to any one, even her mother, about her sleep-walking adventure. I hesitated at first to promise; but on thinking of the state of her mother's health, and how the knowledge of such a thing would fret her, and thinking, too, of how such a story might become distorted—nay, infallibly would—in case it should leak out, I thought it wiser to do so. I hope I did right. I have locked the door, and the key is tied to my wrist, so perhaps I shall not be again disturbed. Lucy is sleeping soundly; the reflex of the dawn is high and far over the sea. . . .

Same day, noon.—All goes well. Lucy slept till I woke her, and seemed not even to have changed her side. The adventure of the night does not seem to have harmed her; on the contrary, it has benefited her, for she looks better this morning than she has done for weeks. I was sorry to notice that my clumsiness with the safety-pin hurt her. Indeed, it might have been serious, for the skin of her throat was pierced. I must have pinched up a piece of loose skin and have transfixed it, for there are two little red points like pin-pricks and on the band of her nightdress was a drop of blood. When I apologized and was concerned about it, she laughed and petted me, and said she did not even feel it. Fortunately it cannot leave a scar, as it is so tiny.

Same day, night.—We passed a happy day. The air was clear, and the sun bright, and there was a cool breeze. We took our lunch to Mulgrave Woods, Mrs. Westenra driving by the road and Lucy and I walking by the cliff-path and joining her at the gate. I felt a little sad myself, for I could not but feel how *absolutely* happy it would have been had Jonathan been with me. But there! I must only be patient. In the evening we strolled in the Casino Terrace, and heard some good music by Spohr and Mackenzie, and went to bed early. Lucy seems more restful than she has been for some time, and fell asleep at once. I shall lock the door and secure the key the same as before, though I do not expect any trouble to-night.

August 12.—My expectations were wrong, for twice during the night I was wakened by Lucy trying to get out. She seemed, even in her sleep, to be a little impatient at finding the door shut, and went back to bed under a sort of protest. I woke with the dawn, and heard the birds chirping outside of the window. Lucy woke, too, and, I was glad to see, was even better than on the previous morning. All her old gaiety of manner seemed to have come back, and she came and snuggled in beside me, and told me all about Arthur; I told her how anxious I was about Jonathan, and then she tried to comfort me. Well, she succeeded somewhat, for, though sympathy can't alter facts, it can help to make them more bearable.

August 13.—Another quiet day, and to bed with the key on my wrist as before. Again I woke in the night, and found Lucy sitting up in bed, still asleep, pointing to the window. I got up quietly and, pulling aside the blind, looked out. It was brilliant moonlight, and the soft effect of the light over the sea and sky—merged together in one great, silent mystery—was beautiful beyond words. Between me and the moon flitted a great bat, coming and going in great, whirling circles. Once or twice it came quite close, but was, I suppose, frightened at seeing me, and flitted away across the harbour towards the Abbey. When I came back from the window Lucy had lain down again, and was sleeping peacefully. She did not stir all night.

August 14.—On the East Cliff, reading and writing all day. Lucy seems to have become as much in love with the spot as I am, and it is hard to get her away from it when it is time to come home for lunch or tea or dinner. This afternoon she made a funny remark. We were coming home for dinner, and had come to the top of the steps up from the West Pier and stopped to look at the view, as we generally do. The setting sun, low down in the sky, was just dropping behind Kettleness; the red light was

(*Continued on page* 149)

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thrown over on the East Cliff and the old Abbey, and seemed to bathe everything in a beautiful rosy glow. We were silent for a while and suddenly Lucy murmured as if to herself:

"His red eyes again! They are just the same." It was such an odd expression, coming apropos of nothing, that it quite startled me. I slewed round a little, so as to see Lucy well without seeming to stare at her, and saw that she was in a half-dreamy state, with an odd look on her face that I could not quite make out; so I said nothing, but followed her eyes. She appeared to be looking over at our own seat, whereon was a dark figure seated alone. I was a little startled myself, for it seemed for an instant as if the stranger had great eyes like burning flames; but a second look dispelled the illusions. The red sunlight was shining on the windows of St. Mary's Church behind our seat, and as the sun dipped there was just sufficient change in the refraction and reflection to make it appear as if the light moved. I called Lucy's attention to the peculiar effect, and she became herself with a start, but she looked sad all the same; it may have been that she was thinking of that terrible night up there. We never refer to it; so I said nothing, and we went home to dinner. Lucy had a headache and went early to bed. I saw her asleep, and went out for a little stroll myself; I walked along the cliffs to the westward, and was full of sweet sadness, for I was thinking of Jonathan. When coming home—it was then bright moonlight, so bright that, though the front of our part of the Crescent was in shadow, everything could be well seen—I threw a glance up at our window, and saw Lucy's head leaning out. I thought that perhaps she was looking out for me, so I opened my handkerchief and waved it. She did not notice or make any movement whatever. Just then, the moonlight crept round an angle of the building, and the light fell on the window. There distinctly was Lucy with her head lying up against the side of the window-sill and her eyes shut. She was fast asleep, and by her, seated on the window-sill, was something that looked like a good-sized bird. I was afraid she might get a chill, so I ran upstairs, but as I came into the room she was moving back to her bed, fast asleep, and breathing heavily; she was holding her hand to her throat, as though to protect it from cold. I did not wake her, but tucked her up warmly; I have taken care that the door is locked and the window securely fastened.

She looks so sweet as she sleeps; but she is paler than is her wont, and there is a drawn, haggard look under her eyes which I do not like. I fear she is fretting about something. I wish I could find out what it is.

August 15.—Rose later than usual. Lucy was languid and tired, and slept on after we had been called. We had a happy surprise at breakfast. Arthur's father is better, and wants the marriage to come off soon. Lucy is full of quiet joy, and her mother is glad and sorry at once. Later on in the day she told me the cause. She is grieved to lose Lucy as her very own, but she is rejoiced that she is soon to have some one to protect her. Poor dear, sweet lady! She confided to me that she has got her death-warrant. She has not told Lucy, and made me promise secrecy; her doctor told her that within a few months, at most, she must die, for her heart is weakening. At any time, even now, a sudden shock would be almost sure to kill her. Ah, we were wise to keep from her the affair of the dreadful night of Lucy's sleep-walking.

August 17.—No diary for two whole days. I have not had the heart to write. Some sort of shadowy pall seems to be coming over our happiness. No news from Jonathan, and Lucy seems to be growing weaker, whilst her mother's hours are numbering to a close. I do not understand Lucy's fading away as she is doing. She eats well and sleeps well, and enjoys the fresh air; but all the time the roses in her cheeks are fading and she gets weaker and more languid day by day; at night I hear her gasping as if for air. I keep the key of our door always fastened to my wrist at night, but she gets up and walks about the room, and sits at the open window. Last night I found her leaning out when I woke up, and when I tried to wake her I could not; she was in a faint. When I managed to restore her she was as weak as water, and cried silently between long, painful struggles for breath. When I asked her how she came to be at the window she shook her head and turned away. I trust her feeling ill may not be from that unlucky prick of the safety-pin. I looked at her throat just now as she lay asleep, and the tiny wounds seem not to have healed. They are still open, and, if anything, larger than before, and the edges of them are faintly white. They are like little white dots with red centres. Unless they heal within a day or two, I shall insist on the doctor seeing about them.

Letter, Samuel F. Billington & Son, Solicitors, Whitby, to Messrs. Smith & Co., London

"*August* 17.

"Dear Sirs,—

"Herewith please receive invoice of goods sent by Great Northern Railway. Same are to be delivered at Carfax, near Purfleet, immediately on receipt at goods station, King's Cross. The house is at present empty, but enclosed please find keys, all of which are labelled.

"You will please deposit the boxes, fifty in number, which form the consignment, in the partially ruined building forming part of the house and marked 'A' on rough diagram enclosed. Your agent will easily recognize the locality, as it is the ancient chapel of the mansion. The goods leave by the train at 9.30 to-night, and

will be due at King's Cross at 4.30 to-morrow afternoon. As our client wishes the delivery made as soon as possible, we shall be obliged by your having teams ready at King's Cross at the time named and forthwith conveying the goods to destination. In order to obviate any possible delays through any routine requirements as to payment in your departments, we enclose cheque herewith for ten pounds (£10), receipt of which please acknowledge. Should the charge be less than this amount, you can return balance; if greater, we shall at once send cheque for difference on hearing from you. You are to leave the keys on coming away in the main hall of the house, where the proprietor may get them on his entering the house by means of his duplicate key.

"Pray do not take us as exceeding the bounds of business courtesy in pressing you in all ways to use the utmost expedition.

"We are, dear Sirs,

"Faithfully yours,

"SAMUEL F. BILLINGTON & SON."

Letter, Messrs. Smith & Co., London, to Messrs. Billington & Son, Whitby

"*August* 21.

"Dear Sirs,—

"We beg to acknowledge £10 received and to return cheque £1 17s. 9d., amount of overplus, as shown in receipted account herewith. Goods are delivered in exact accordance with instructions, and keys left in parcel in main hall, as directed.

"We are, dear Sirs,

"Yours respectfully,

"*Pro* SMITH & Co."

MINA MURRAY'S JOURNAL

AUGUST 18.—I am happy to-day, and write sitting on the seat in the churchyard. Lucy is ever so much better. Last night she slept well all night, and did not disturb me once. The roses seem coming back already to her cheeks, though she is still sadly pale and wan-looking. If she were in any way anæmic I could understand it, but she is not. She is in gay spirits and full of life and cheerfulness. All the morbid reticence seems to have passed from her, and she has just reminded me, as if I needed any reminding, of *that* night, and that it was here, on this very seat, I found her asleep. As she told me she tapped playfully with the heel of her boot on the stone slab and said:

"My poor little feet didn't make much noise then! I dare say poor old Mr. Swales would have told me that it was because I didn't want to wake up Geordie." I asked her if she had dreamed at all that night. Before she answered, that sweet, puckered look came into her forehead, which Arthur I call him Arthur from her habit—says he loves; and, indeed, I don't wonder that he does. Then she went on in a half-dreaming kind of way, as if trying to recall it to herself:

"I didn't quite dream; but it all seemed to be real. I only wanted to be here in this spot—I don't know why, for I was afraid of something—I don't know what. I remember, though I suppose I was asleep, passing through the streets and over the bridge. A fish leaped as I went by, and I leaned over to look at it, and I heard a lot of dogs howling—the whole town seemed as if it must be full of dogs howling at once—as I went up the steps. Then I have a vague memory of something long and dark with red eyes, just as we saw in the sunset, and something very sweet and bitter all around me at once; and then I seemed sinking into deep green water, and there was a singing in my ears, as I have heard there is to drowning men; and then everything seemed passing away from me; my soul seemed to go out from my body and float about the air. I seemed to remember that once the West Lighthouse was right under me, and then there was a sort of agonizing feeling, as if I were in an earthquake, and I came back and found you shaking my body. I saw you do it before I felt you."

Then she began to laugh. It seemed a little uncanny to me, and I listened to her breathlessly. I did not quite like it, and thought it better not to keep her mind on the subject, so we drifted on to other subjects, and Lucy was like her old self again. When we got home the fresh breeze had braced her up, and her pale cheeks were really more rosy. Her mother rejoiced when she saw her, and we all spent a very happy evening together.

August 19.—Joy, joy, joy! although not all joy. At last, news of Jonathan. The dear fellow has been ill; that is why he did not write. I am not afraid to think it or to say it, now that I know. Mr. Hawkins sent me on the letter, and wrote himself, oh, so kindly. I am to leave in the morning and to go over to Jonathan, and to help to nurse him if necessary, and to bring him home. Mr. Hawkins says it would not be a bad thing if we were to be married out there. I have cried over the good Sister's letter till I can feel it wet against my bosom, where it lies. It is of Jonathan, and must be next my heart, for he is *in* my heart. My journey is all mapped out, and my luggage ready. I am only taking one change of dress; Lucy will bring my trunk to London and keep it till I send for it, for it may be that . . . I must write no more; I must keep it to say to Jonathan, my husband. The letter that he has seen and touched must comfort me till we meet.

(*To be continued in next month's "Argosy"*)

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A Bank Mystery

The sequel to a strange investment

By ROBERT BARR

CHANTER'S BANK is in Scorpion's Lane, off Lombard Street, City. The lane is narrow, dark, very old-fashioned, and the most old-fashioned building is Chanter'sBank. The door is massive and sombre, perhaps it once possessed a colour of its own, but centuries of City smoke have given it a tone of antiquity not to be imitated by modern art. The brass furnishings, however, are kept flawlessly bright by someone, hard rubbed doubtless early in the morning before City people come to their offices, for no one ever saw the manipulation of them. The lower parts of the windows are barred with a railing of ancient iron, and the glass is at least semi-transparent. It is questionable if the inmates can see anything that is going on in the lane, for the windows are set high : but on dark days the passer-by on the narrow pavement opposite the bank may notice the dim refulgence of a chandelier burning candles, as one might catch a glimpse of a lighted altar through a cathedral window whose glass is of a subdued, partially obscured tint.

An observant man venturing inside might not fail to note that on the desk of each clerk stands a heavy brass candlestick with a pair of snuffers and a conical extinguisher on the bowl, and a wax candle to be lighted when the day is foggy. The brass within is as faultlessly polished as the brass on the door. The house is one of the few now remaining in the City which possesses on each side of the door a rust-eaten torch extinguisher like an iron night-cap. Chanter's Bank looks down upon the Bank of England with that complacent tolerance which a dignified old gentleman in the stock and costume of the last century exhibits as he regards an energetic youngster who is making money, perhaps by methods not in vogue when he began business. Chanter's, if put to it, would admit that the Bank of England is a very creditable institution, financially sound in all probability, yet there were houses that dealt in money long before the Bank of England had been thought of, and Chanter's is not one of the youngest of these.

It has been stated that the original Chanter came from Scotland in the time of James I ; following that monarch from their mutual native land, each in his individual betterment : but this cannot be the case, for we read in the private accounts of James that early in his reign he borrowed a thousand pounds from Chanter, and it is a fact not to be disputed that no Scotsman had that amount to lend who had so recently come across the border. Indeed, it is likely that the Chynteer who made the golden chaplet for one of Henry VIII's wives, an ornament for which Henry forgot to pay, was one of the progenitors of this house, and it is probable some of that name were goldsmiths in the City long before.

Money will do much in this world, and it is said that even the doors of exclusive society open before it, but an ample fortune

will not necessarily bring you into business relations with Chanter's.

A connexion with this bank is something to be treasured—a privilege to be handed down from generation to generation like an entailed estate or wine of noble vintage.

During the South African flurry—not the war, but the mines, when men became fabulously rich in a day—a new capitalist rashly entered Chanter's, leaving the door open behind him—an unheard-of occurrence. He threw down on the counter a cheque for fifty thousand pounds, and said he would open an account there—he had heard that the firm was stable.

The elderly cashier, scarcely glancing at the important document, being perturbed about the door until the porter closed it, remarked mildly:

"Have you an introduction, sir?"

"An introduction? Thunder! Isn't the money introduction enough?"

"Sir, it is a regulation of the house that new business shall be vouched for by two of our old customers."

"Vouched for by two! That's a novel idea, isn't it?"

"Comparatively so, sir. The rule was adopted by the house in the year 1642, when times were troublous and the continuity of Government was regarded as uncertain."

"Quite right, no doubt. Still, I venture to say that you won't turn away fifty thousand pounds and more to follow for all your frills. You don't get a cheque like that offered to you every day, now do you?"

The venerable cashier did not answer the question; it was no business of his to make comment on the transactions of the house.

The bank was the home of secrecy, giving precedence reluctantly to the sphinx in that line.

"Sir, if you bring two written recommendations from any two of our clients I shall be happy to place your proposal before the manager of the bank, whose decision is usually regarded as final, save only in case of appeal to Mr. Chanter himself."

"Oh, life's too short for that sort of thing!" cried the angered capitalist, picking up his neglected cheque. "There are plenty of houses in London who will be glad to take the money."

This statement was so perfectly true that the aged cashier did not attempt to contravene it, but held a respectful silence, while the other went out in a hurry, leaving the door open behind him, which the porter in snuff-coloured livery closed with gentle finality.

If a man stationed himself before the door of Chanter's Bank during business hours, he would probably come to the conclusion that all its customers were old men, or, at least, men getting on in life, but still hale and hearty, with the deportment of those who are well-to-do in this world. Few even of these would have known Mr. Chanter if they had met him, for a personal conference with the head of the bank was a privilege not lightly accorded, or, indeed, lightly asked for, and the customers of the institution were men who had a pride and a reserve of their own, ungiven to the soliciting or accepting of favours. In truth, many City men supposed old Venebles to be Mr. Chanter, whereas he was merely the banker's confidential secretary.

Every afternoon, except on Saturdays and Bank Holidays, at half-past four precisely, old Venebles emerged from the bank, the snuff-coloured porter holding open the door, and disappeared in the direction of Lombard Street. He was always dressed in exactly the same fashion, like a figure from a tailor's costume plate of half a century since. The mistake in identity is scarcely to be wondered at, because if you came along Scorpion's Lane on the stroke of four, you would see a closed brougham drive to the bank door and you might catch a fleeting glimpse of the actual Mr. Chanter, who never kept the vehicle waiting and was never kept waiting himself. You would then come to know that old Venebles was within an ace of being Mr. Chanter, a little less dignified, a little less everything, but still a marvellous human reproduction. Invariably accompanying Mr. Chanter is a serious, old-looking young man, the son of the house, who will ultimately be its head. He steps into the brougham as soon as his father is seated.

Mr. Chanter is so completely a part of the bank, that it is difficult to imagine him the possessor of a home and a wife and children, yet such must be the case, and when one remembers that there always had been a Chanter to follow in the succession, the incredible juxtaposition of some sort

of sentiment with the head of the house has to be taken for granted, like the rise and fall of the tide or other mysteries of nature.

There is no trace of sentiment, however, in the bank. It was and is the temple of rigid business methods, modified by unhurried courtesy. The motto: "This is my busy day," is not hung up, plain to the sight, at Chanter's. There is no busy day there. The hours are from ten to four, and during that time affairs are conducted with a respectful deliberation in striking contrast to the hurry elsewhere.

No painted sign outside gives intimation to the public that this edifice is Chanter's. It might be taken for a private dwelling in such a thoroughfare as Scorpion's Lane. The thought of publicity or self-advertising in any form had been most repugnant to generation after generation of Chanters.

No defalcation had ever occurred there, and a dishonest employee was unthinkable. Those who served the bank in whatever capacity were comfortably pensioned, each according to his degree, when he became too old for further usefulness.

Decorum and order reigned throughout the antiquated establishment, and it need hardly be said that Mr. Chanter would have regarded with grave disapproval any occurrence which might have been termed unusual, and with subdued horror any incident that would tend to bring the name of the bank into the columns of the public Press. It may therefore be imagined with what distress Mr. Chanter looks back upon the strange case of Mr. John Glen, a man who was one of London's most staid and respectable merchants, certainly the last person on earth to be suspected of connexion with anything unbusinesslike.

And yet, as Mr. Chanter afterwards remembered, John Glen was not one of the hereditary customers of the bank, which may account for much. He had been admitted to the public side of the counters at the early age of forty, but was so vouched for by two of the bank's most cherished clients as a man honest in trade and of remarkable success, considering his youth.

The former Mr. Chanter had never seen John Glen, the brief formal interview previous to his acceptance having been conducted by the present Mr. Chanter, at that time a boy of thirty-five, a tender age at which almost any indiscretion may be forgiven. Nevertheless, Mr. Chanter blames himself somewhat harshly for his action that day in admitting with such scant scrutiny a stranger into the distinguished circle which dealt with the bank.

However, forty-two years had passed, and Mr. John Glen had given no sign that he was other than he appeared to be. It is not too much to say that he was respected by all in the bank, from the manager in circumspect black to the porter in snuff-coloured livery. John Glen, at the time of the tragic incident to be related, was eighty-two, and showing signs of age, while Mr. Chanter was five years his junior, regarding himself in the prime of life.

¶

IT was on a Monday morning, shortly after the bank was opened, that Mr. John Glen came in, slow and infirm. No other customers were present, and for a long time Mr. Glen held a whispered conference with the grey-haired cashier, the latter listening with deferential attention, making no comment until the other had finished. It was no part of his duty to express astonishment and he did not do so. If one had asked the cashier to subscribe to an Anarchist fund for the blowing up of the Mansion House he would have declined the investment with his customary urbanity, but without any sign of surprise at the suggestion.

"Your proposal is somewhat foreign to my department, Mr. Glen," he said at last. "I venture to suggest that you consult the manager."

"Very well. Is he in at the moment?"

"It is eleven minutes past the hour, so he has been in his room for that length of time. However, I think it would be advisable to make an appointment. May I suggest half-past ten to-morrow morning?"

"If you are kind enough to make an appointment for me I shall be obliged to you."

The cashier bowed, made a note on a slip of paper, and this ended the interview.

At the hour mentioned on Tuesday Mr. John Glen was shown into the room of the manager, a gentleman somewhat older than the cashier, a trifle more stately, a shade less soft spoken. He waved Mr. Glen with civil gesture to a chair, then seated himself in an attitude of attention. The room was severe in its simplicity, wainscoted in old oak that had almost acquired the hue of ebony.

The visitor's hand shook perceptibly, and he seemed to have difficulty in expressing his ideas with anything like logical sequence, but by and by the manager gathered the import of his proposition, and although he did not interrupt his aged client, a slight frown slowly gathered on his brow, and the old man seemed quick to feel that he was losing the sympathy of his auditor, which did not aid the flow of his elocution. His monologue became more and more strange and unconvincing.

The manager sat there for a long time after the other had ceased to speak. The wrinkle deepened in his brow, and he drummed slightly on the heavy table with his fingers.

Finally, he clothed the result of his meditation in words:

"I do not feel justified in dealing with this matter; lacking consultation with my superior I should have to see Mr. Chanter himself before coming to any conclusion. Your request is so far outside the routine of our business that I have great hesitation even in approaching him with regard to it, yet I cannot take upon myself the sole responsibility of refusal. Is there any objection to your stating some valid reason for your extraordinary proposal?"

"I—I would rather not go into that," said Mr. Glen with visible discomposure, mopping his brow with a handkerchief.

"I am almost confident that Mr. Chanter will not entertain it unless some very convincing motive is submitted to him. If this project is of importance to you I should advise you to see him personally, and to be prepared to answer any questions he may think fit to ask. I believe you have met Mr. Chanter before?"

"Yes. Forty-two years ago."

"Then he will no doubt recollect the circumstances, and I shall have less diffidence in approaching him regarding a second interview. Would eleven o'clock to-morrow morning be convenient to you?"

"Yes, if it is equally so for Mr. Chanter."

"I shall make it my task to discover that, and should a postponement be necessary, I shall communicate with you."

The manager rose to his feet, and the conference came to an inconclusive end.

At eleven o'clock on Wednesday Mr. John Glen was ushered into the presence of Mr. Chanter. Two other persons were present—the son, and old Venebles, the confidential secretary.

It is probable that John Glen would have preferred to talk to Mr. Chanter alone, but he made no suggestion that the others should withdraw, knowing the futility of contravening any of the established regulations of the house.

"Good morning, Mr. Glen. We have met before, I think, and neither of us have become any younger since that time, which is something to be thankful for. This is my son, Mr. Glen. He is seven years older than I was at the time I had the pleasure of greeting you on a former occasion, and I am glad to say he has a very thorough knowledge of the business. My manager tells me that you saw him yesterday pursuant to an arrangement with which he feels some delicacy in dealing. Would you be seated, Mr. Glen, and put me in possession of the particulars?"

John Glen sat down in a chair beside the table with young Mr. Chanter on the opposite side, while his father took his place at the head, old Venebles standing deferentially at his elbow.

"I am now an old man," began John Glen slowly, but Mr. Chanter interrupted him.

"Not old, Mr. Glen, not old, getting on in years perhaps—eh, Venebles?"

"Getting on in years, sir," echoed Venebles.

"I have accumulated a respectable competence, and I have no direct heir to whom I can leave the money, for I never married. Others will benefit largely by my death, and to that, of course, I make no objection: it is the law of nature. Still, at the present moment, the money is mine, and I think I am justified in disposing of it as I choose, although my present intentions relate to but a small portion of the amount."

"No exception can be taken to that, Mr. Glen. A man may do as he likes with his own—eh, Venebles?"

"Yes, sir, so long as his action makes no infringement on the rights of others."

"I wish, then, to set aside the sum of ten thousand pounds to remain on deposit in Chanter's Bank, an account to be kept separate from my own personal balance."

"Um, yes," murmured Mr. Chanter, with some hesitation. "I am aware that various trading companies keep different accounts at the same bank under different titles, but it has always seemed to me there was something not quite—what shall I say?—well, straightforward in such a course.

Still, for sufficient reason, and to oblige a customer of forty-two years' standing—what do you think, Venebles ? "

" It could be done, sir, not improperly. John Glen, No. 1 ; John Glen, No. 2. Or, John Glen & Co., and John Glen, private account, sir."

" Yes. I see no objection, Mr. Glen."

" I have not made myself sufficiently clear," continued John Glen, with visible effort. " The ten thousand pounds is not to be placed to my account, either public or private. It is not to be placed to anyone's account. It is to be separated completely and legally from my estate, and held on deposit in Chanter's Bank until such time after my death as it is called for."

" I see, I see. You will leave us the name of the person who is entitled to the money—eh, Venebles ? "

" We should certainly be in possession of the name and full particulars, sir. To prevent a mistake in identity, sir."

" Undoubtedly. Proceed, Mr. Glen."

" I am sorry that I cannot fulfil such a requirement, Mr. Chanter. I will risk the mistake in identity. I wish the bank to take no responsibility whatever."

" But if we receive the money we must accept the responsibility that pertains to it—eh, Venebles ? "

" Undoubtedly, sir."

" I could give you a document waiving all rights in the premises, but even that would not be necessary, for the money will be placed unreservedly in your own hands during my competence to deal with it, and, as I should no longer be alive when you disposed of it, there could be none to object."

" A most unusual proceeding, Mr. Glen. How does it strike you, Venebles ? "

" Most unusual, sir."

" I make a note of my surprise and pass on, Mr. Glen. We will return to that later. How do you propose that we shall recognize the person to whom the money is to be paid ? "

" It is my wish that you will give the sum of ten thousand pounds to any man, boy, or child who comes to your counter and asks for it, giving you simply the word ' Reincarnation.' "

" What ! What ! What ! To pay out such an amount of money without the stroke of a pen—without a voucher to show for it—to any person who drops in off the street and gives a word I do not recognize as being in the vocabulary of a business man. I never heard of such a thing. Did you Venebles ? "

" Never, sir."

Although the old man's words were automatically decisive, his manner had become suddenly absent-minded.

" It is absolutely unprecedented, eh, Venebles ? "

But for once Venebles did not reply. His master turned to him in amazed disapproval. The old man's jaw had dropped ; his eyes were fixed on a corner of the room as if he saw a ghost in its dim recess.

" Did you hear me address you, Venebles ? "

The ancient secretary started.

" I humbly beg your pardon, sir."

" I remarked the course proposed to us was absolutely without precedent."

" I—I should hesitate to say that, sir."

" What do you mean, Venebles ? "

" If I may make so bold as to suggest, Mr. Chanter——"

The old man hesitated.

" Make your suggestion, Venebles," said his master kindly.

" I think it might be well to leave the subject in abeyance for the moment. Perhaps Mr. Glen will be good enough to call again. I should like to have the privilege of placing one or two matters before you, Mr. Chanter."

" There is no necessity to trouble Mr. Glen further. I have already come to a decision. I think it would be most improper for me to accept the commission."

John Glen exhibited some agitation at this disappointment.

" I trust your decision is not final, Mr. Chanter," he protested when he had recovered himself. " The suggestion made seems to me a very good one. It is no trouble for me to come here again. I have been for forty-two years a customer of this bank, and I should be glad if you took that fact into consideration."

" The point you mention is certainly not without weight with me, and I myself referred to it only a few moments ago ; but really, Mr Glen, the request you make is so —I am distressed to use a harsh term—fantastic, that I scarcely know how to deal with it. Would you be good enough to give me some rational explanation for a proceeding which I cannot help regarding as out of the common ? I think we are entitled to ask that, Venebles ? "

" Assuredly, sir."

"I am afraid, Mr. Chanter, that my explanation will not come within the limit of your word 'rational.' I have some fear that it may leave my case worse than at the beginning. May I ask if you have ever had a mental suspicion that you formerly conducted this business—that the precincts of this bank were not new to you even when apparently you entered it for the first time?"

"I can never imagine myself being anywhere else but in the bank all my life, if that is what you mean."

"Not exactly. I mean in a former life. I have always been haunted by that feeling—that London is not new to me—that I have engaged in traffic here perhaps centuries ago."

Mr. Chanter's countenance showed traces of alarm. Venebles was gazing fixedly at John Glen.

"And I am thoroughly convinced that I shall reappear upon the scene—re-engage in the struggle. I shall be a child, a boy, a young man in London again. I am anxious to smooth my way, to avoid in future the severe contest with fortune which I came through in my past youth owing to lack of funds at the beginning. I have a hope that I shall remember the word I have given you, which is at present so deeply stamped on my mind; it may become obliterated later in life, but at first I think it will be there, and this is why I make the proviso that a child may claim the money and have it put to his credit, to be drawn upon when he becomes of age. The chance, I admit, is remote."

For some time after John Glen finished his recital there was silence in the room, and when Mr. Chanter spoke it was with a hesitation alien to him.

"Your beliefs—if I have understood you—are not in accordance with the tenets—of the—ah—Established Church, Mr. Glen. What's your opinion, Venebles?"

"They are not, sir."

"I think perhaps we had better postpone this discussion as has been suggested. May I say eleven o'clock to-morrow?"

Mr. Chanter rose slowly, his manner and action duplicated by his son. Old Venebles opened the door, and the three inclined their heads as Mr. John Glen tottered out.

The final conference began punctually as the clock was striking eleven. John Glen found father and son seated at the table in their former positions—Venebles standing at the elbow of the elder man. On the table had been placed two bulky volumes, strongly bound in stout, faded leather, thickly ribbed at the backs. When John Glen had seated himself, Mr. Chanter began to speak.

"I may say at once that I have resolved to accede to your request. I find myself impelled to do so by precedents which had eluded my memory when you were here yesterday."

John Glen bowed, and Mr. Chanter opened the first volume.

"I find in the records of the bank that on April 21st, 1679, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Sir William Abswich died, leaving by will a large package to my ancestor, the then head of this house. The bequeathed package was found to contain bar gold to the value of £3,247 15s. 9d. My ancestor was instructed to hold this bullion in trust and to deliver it to any person who asked for it, giving the word 'Abswich.' I may add that this gold is in our vaults to-day."

Mr. Chanter closed the huge volume with a snap that sent some fine dust flying.

"From my ancestor's private note regarding this entry, which is very laconic, I surmise rather than possess assurance that he accepted the trust with reluctance, but Sir William being dead and not to be expostulated with, the trust was accepted. I now come to the year 1765. I find that a London merchant named James Godfrey gave the sum of £7,250 to Chanter's Bank under almost similar conditions, the word in that case being 'Futurity.' The note under the entry is as follows: 'See bequest of Sir William Abswich, April, 1679,' which I take to mean that the former transaction was looked upon as a precedent. This treasure also has never been asked for."

Mr. Chanter looked up from the second volume and saw John Glen leaning partly upright against the table, with staring eyes fixed on the two records.

"That money was for me!" he gasped. "The bullion and the coins were for me, lying here useless while I struggled with adversity. It was mine."

"No, no, Mr. Glen! I cannot admit the truth of such an assumption! I shall resist any attempt on your part to profit by a confidence reposed in you."

"I have no need for the money. No attempt shall be made by me. I am horrified by the appalling——"

John Glen got no further. He swayed and fell, and died before one of the three could move to his assistance.

The Prince of Crersa

Between honour and dishonour there is but a fine line

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

A WHIRLWIND of small snowflakes and a wind which roared through the mighty forests of pines, snapping the strongest of them as though they had been saplings! A wild night in the plains and cities, here among the mountains a pandemonium of terrors! Clouds as black as ink brought impenetrable darkness; the clamour of crashing boughs and howling wind sank every now and then into insignificance before the roaring of deep-throated guns, whose red fire flashed out across what seemed to be a bottomless abyss. Below, the army of the Turks, decimated in numbers, yet still a host; within the walls of Crersa, the defenders of an oppressed and brave country making their last stand in their ancient stronghold.

Three men stood on the walls, holding to the ramparts for dear life, talking eagerly together. Every now and then they paused and strove to see what lay beneath in the red, lurid light of the cannon flames. Hohenloff, who spoke, was general of the forces, and in command of the defence.

"Prince," he said, "there is no longer any doubt. Crersa, unconquered for a thousand years, will fall now through treachery. Perhaps to-night, perhaps to-morrow. Who can say?"

Prince Maurice of Herania, who saw a kingdom, the kingdom of his forefathers, passing away, groaned aloud.

"Hohenloff," he said, "may God grant that you are mistaken. They are bold, and they have ventured very near the walls, as you know. It may be chance."

"It is no chance," Hohenloff answered roughly. "On Monday the southern buttress was hit. Outside we covered the weakness; inside alone it was apparent. Yet all day they poured in a merciless fire upon that one weak spot. On Tuesday we moved the powder magazine. Their guns follow, and Crersa was very nearly blown to atoms. On Wednesday we planned a sortie to drive in a herd of goats. We left the gates in darkness as black as pitch, and never a sound was made, yet without warning they were waiting, fell upon us, and only half a dozen escaped. I could give you a hundred proofs were they needed, yet there are enough. My Prince, there is a traitor here, and unless we find him Crersa is doomed."

Once more the thunder of cannon—this time from a new spot in the darkness. From below came the crashing of masonry and the crying of wounded men. Hohenloff stamped his foot in bitter anger.

"This, then, accounts for their long silence," he cried. "They have heard of our attempt to rebuild the north wall, and they have moved their guns to command it. Oh, to think that brave men should be the jest and the victims of a cursed spy."

Then Romakoff spoke, chief minister of Herania, a small man with sallow features, but with the forehead of a lion.

"Hohenloff," he said, "our secrets are not the secrets of the whole garrison. How many have known of these things?"

"Not more than a dozen," Hohenloff answered. "It is a cursed thing to say, but the traitor is one of our inner council."

"Their names?"

"Helkoff."

"A clumsy man, but faithful."

"Ments."

"A true man."

"Rettenick."

"I would answer for him with my life."

"Petroff."

"As true as steel."

"Melakoff."

"An honest man."

"Ulmul."

"Wounded to death yesterday fighting like a lion. Traitors are made of other stuff."

"Sirka."

"Also wounded. Has been unconscious for three days."

"Myself."

"Well."

"Yourself."

"Well."

"The Prince."

There was silence. Then Hohenloff spoke: "The traitor is not amongst these."

"Then in the name of God," cried Romakoff, "where shall we find him?"

Only the Prince was pale and thoughtful.

"To-night," he said, "I watch without the gates."

"And I with you," Hohenloff cried. "You may need my sword. The dogs are close at hand."

But Prince Maurice shook his head.

"I watch alone," he said.

"It is not safe," Hohenloff cried. "I, at least, will bear you company."

"I watch alone," the Prince answered. "It is my command."

¶

AS the night drew on the storm increased. The gunners worked at their task with numbed fingers; the watchmen on the walls were like moving pillars of snow. Every now and then the roaring of cannon drowned the fierce wind; the red belching fires lit up the snow-clad country. Round the northern gate were gathered a company of soldiers, and into the midst of them a muffled figure in military cape pushed his way. At a word from him they fell back with respectful salute. He passed through to the very archway of the gate. For a while he stood talking to the officer in command. Then came the clanking of bolts and the creaking of bars. Prince Maurice passed out alone.

There was a good deal of whispering amongst those who saw him go—many surmises—for outside the gate were dangers of many sorts such as it seemed rash indeed for their sovereign to face alone. But he left no hint behind as to his destination; and, although gracious to the lowliest of his subjects, he was never one who suffered others to question him as to his doings. So they whispered together, and wondered. As yet no rumours of treachery had stolen abroad, for Hohenloff had kept his own counsel, even from the House of Advisers. The spirits of the people must be maintained, and there is nothing in this world so chilling, so apt to discourage the beleaguered as the very suggestion of a traitor within the gates. So neither the soldiers nor the citizens knew anything of this new cause for anxiety, and their prince's quest was a mystery to them. Only, they peered out into the darkness, and waited for his return, ready to throw open the gates, or to sally out to the rescue at any sound of fighting.

Outside the city the storm was raging more fiercely than ever. The wind swept down the ravine with a roar like thunder, and for all his great strength Prince Maurice was more than once hurled breathless against the wall. He was making his way, step by step, to the northern boundary, where a few watchers were stationed and no system of defence attempted, for here, at least, the town was impregnable. The walls overhung a great ravine—there was not a single spot from which an attack could be even attempted. But Prince Maurice took up his station in a sheltered nook facing a high tower, and, crouching back amongst the shadows, waited.

As the hours passed on, his brow became less clouded. He even ventured to draw a sigh of relief. His had been a hateful task, and nothing but a stern sense of duty to his suffering people had induced him to undertake it. He was playing the spy upon a woman, and a woman dependent upon his hospitality—a prisoner also in his unhappy city—watching her house. Not only this, but the woman was the Countess of Merguillon, the wife of the French resident, who was even now seeking in Paris to win aid for him. Not only this, but she was the woman whom Prince Maurice, although no single word of it had ever passed his lips, very dearly loved.

His veins were almost frozen with the cold, and his fingers were numbed. The snow was thick upon his military cloak and peaked hat; he had become a figure invisible—a human icicle. Yet as the night passed on his heart grew lighter. Death and disaster he could face as a brave man should, fighting for his people and his kingdom with his sword red in Moslem blood. The dishonour of the woman whom he worshipped would have been a harder thing to bear. So he listened to the guns and watched the red fires leap out into the darkness with lightening heart and something which was almost a smile upon his blue lips. In an hour his vigil would be over. In an hour he would

banish for ever those vague but horrible suspicions.

But before the hour was passed strange things happened. Up in the topmost window of that tower which he had been watching there flashed for a moment a faint light. It flickered, went out, and reappeared. Prince Maurice felt his heart stop beating, and a cold more deadly than anything he had yet felt went shivering through his veins. Someone was there waving a lamp, and from the side of the ravine came the answering signal.

He looked no more at the window, but watched the dancing light come nearer and nearer. A man carrying a torch—nothing more—but a tragedy in itself. The light in the window was extinguished, but its purpose had been accomplished. Prince Maurice moved slowly along by the side of the wall until he stood immediately in the shadow of the tower.

Soon there came sounds—a man's footsteps muffled in the snow. A torch was thrown hissing forward upon the ground, a man's head and then his body appeared, as, with a final effort, he pulled himself up the side of the ravine. A tall man, breathless with his climb and dishevelled. Prince Maurice could have thrust his sword into the man's body from where he was, but remained motionless. He was waiting.

The new-comer set his heel upon the torch, first lighting a cigarette from its embers. Then he stood upright and looked impatiently towards the tower. He hummed a tune, shook the snow from his clothes, and walked restlessly backwards and forwards. At last he came to a sudden standstill, and a little exclamation of relief broke from his lips. A small, nail-studded door at the base of the tower had been opened, and a woman was standing there.

She held the lamp above her head, and from where he stood Prince Maurice could see her plainly. She wore a fur cloak which left revealed her pink satin slippers and her face. There were diamonds flashing in her black hair, the hand which held the lamp was ablaze with rings. The man stepped forward, confidently, as though he would have entered, but she pushed him back.

"Not to-night, my friend," Prince Maurice heard her say, and he saw, too, that wonderfully alluring smile upon her lips which had befooled many men before him.

"It is not safe. Do you know that there are men watching my house from the street, and I am almost afraid to come to you for even this moment? See, I have written down here what you wanted to know. I have kept my word, but I am ashamed of it. Now go."

He bent over her, and the lamplight fell upon his dark, sallow face, with the black moustache and coal-black eyes. Then Prince Maurice recognized him, and ground his teeth with bitter rage.

"Not without a word at least, Sophie," the man cried lightly. "A curse upon this obstinate prince and his mulish people!"

They whispered together for a moment. Prince Maurice's hand stole underneath his cloak and grasped the hilt of his sword. Then there came the sound of the door being softly closed.

"To-morrow," the Turk whispered.

Then Prince Maurice stepped out, and threw aside his cloak.

"To-morrow, Menid Bey," he cried, "you will spend in hell. Draw and defend yourself, man. Quick!"

The Turk recognized him with a little cry. He sprang back, but the prince's sword was upon his throat.

"On guard, general," he cried, "or I shall forget my manners, and spit you like a dog."

The Turk shrugged his shoulders, and drew his sword slowly.

"Prince Maurice!" he exclaimed. "My friend of the Boulevards. Come, be reasonable. We are old friends. Why try to kill one another?"

"I have no friends amongst my country's enemies," Prince Maurice cried. "The old days in Paris are gone. I was a citizen then. I am a sovereign now. Draw, Menid Bey, or by Heaven, I will remember only that I have found a spy sneaking his way into my city, and have you hanged from yonder turret."

"We cannot see to fight," the Turk cried.

"Then have at you in the darkness," Prince Maurice cried fiercely, with a lunge forward. But the Turk was prepared, and the sparks flashed from their swords.

"'Tis a madman's contest," he cried. "Come, Maurice, mine was but an idle errand. The countess and I were friends in Paris. I wished but to show her the way to safety."

But Prince Maurice only scoffed as he thrust his naked sword into the darkness.

"Be silent," he cried, "unless you wish to die with a lie upon your lips."

Then the little door in the wall swung suddenly open, and the countess, who had heard their voices, stood there, holding the lamp over her head. A cry broke from her white lips as she recognized the two men—a cry which changed swiftly into a scream of terror. For the light of her lamp, dim though it was, and flickering with the wind, was sufficient to show them each other's whereabouts. The Turk sprang upon his opponent like a wild cat. Prince Maurice parried his blows with the skill of a practised swordsman. The result was never for a moment doubtful even to the woman who stood there still with the lamp in her shaking hand. Menid Bey, with the sick fear of death at his heart, called out to her:

"Throw away the light, Sophie!"

But the countess only laughed—a hard, unnatural laugh—and held it out a little more into the black night.

"Kill the dog, my prince!" she cried. "Kill him, for he is a spy."

Prince Maurice took no notice, but he held his opponent, now unnerved with terror, wholly at his mercy.

"Menid Bey," he cried, "if we had met thus in fair fight I would have spared you for the sake of the old days when we were friends. But you have come here secretly, a traitor and a spy, and you must meet the death you merit."

Once more the swords clashed, a whirling flame of steel, and then the death yell of Menid Bey rang out above the storm of wind, above the booming of the never-silent guns. Prince Maurice's sword dripped red upon the trampled snow. He turned towards the door, where the woman was standing transfixed with fear.

"With your permission," he said, "I will return to the city through your house."

¶

SHE motioned him to pass her, and locked and barred the gate. They passed up a narrow passage into a great square hall. Several servants were cowering before the great door. When Prince Maurice appeared, his sword still in his hand, they fled screaming to different parts of the house. The countess threw open the door of her own apartment. He caught a glimpse of a room where a great open stove was burning—a room full of cushions and lounges, a mandoline here, books there, flowers everywhere. But Prince Maurice did not enter.

"I have no wish to linger in this house," he said sternly. "Tell your servants to unbolt that door and let me out."

She laid her white hands upon his shoulders, and turned her beautiful, distraught face upwards to his.

"Maurice," she said, "listen to me."

He threw her arms roughly away.

"What have I or Crersa done to you," he asked bitterly, "that you should plot for our ruin? Come, answer me that, woman. Have you been ill-treated? Have you found us inhospitable?"

Insensibly she drew him over the threshold. But he stopped at the entrance of the room and would advance no farther. She stood before him with clasped hands and great eloquent eyes fixed upon him.

"No, a thousand times no," she moaned. "I have been to blame, and I know it. Yet, is it much wrong I have done? I have suffered Menid Bey to come to me as a friend, for I knew him years ago, and he found his way here by stealth but a few nights ago. I have been weary to death of my life here, Prince Maurice. Do you wonder at it? Day after day I have spent here alone, seeing nothing but grim, famine-stricken faces, and hearing nothing but the roaring of guns and the shrieks of the wounded. Was it for this, do you think, that I left our beautiful Paris, that I strove to get Henri the appointment here, to be left alone with never a soul to speak to—not even you?"

Her eyes forced his to look into them. She knew then that she was safe. Yet he held her coldly at arm's length.

"Sophie," he said, "if I have kept away—you know the reason. Your husband is absent on a mission in our interests—to save us—and I have sat at his table and he has treated me as his friend. Need I say anything more?"

"And why?" she asked, "should my husband receive all your considerations, and I—none?"

"There was no middle course," he answered.

Her eyes leapt to his.

"Then you—cared?"

"For the woman I thought you were—yes," he cried. "For the woman you are

—no. If Hohenloff and the others had seen what I have seen to-night, not even I, the Prince of Crersa, could save you."

She shuddered, and even at that moment there came a great knocking at the front door and a tramping of feet outside. She called aloud, and stopped those who would have answered the summons. Prince Maurice watched her with a heavy heart, for her terror was the terror of a guilty woman.

"Ask what they want, Francis," she cried to a servant outside. "Tell them that it is too late for me, an unprotected woman in a beleaguered city, to open my doors."

Even whilst she spoke the shouts from the street told her what she dreaded most to hear. Others besides Prince Maurice had found her out.

"Bring her out—the traitress!"

"Come and show yourself, you who are selling Crersa to the Turks!"

"We will hang her from the walls!"

She fell upon her knees and clutched him frantically.

"You will save me, Maurice, from these people? You will not let them kill me? You will not desert me?"

"I will do what I can for you," he said coldly. "Listen. Is there any place from which I can speak to these people without opening the doors?"

"There is a balcony on the next floor," she gasped. "They will obey you, Maurice. Tell them to go away."

"Show me how to reach the balcony."

She caught hold of his arm and hurried him upstairs. It was her bedroom from which the balcony projected. Prince Maurice set his teeth and swore hard to himself. For the first time in his life he faced his people with a doubtful heart.

Below, the street and courtyard were full of a yelling mob; beyond, pandemonium reigned. The Palace had caught fire, and red tongues of flames were leaping up into the night. The roaring of the guns was nearer than ever, and more fierce, mingled every now and then with the crashing of masonry and the shrieks of dying men. Prince Maurice lifted his voice, but not a soul below heeded him. They swarmed around the door like madmen. They were drunk with their lust for vengeance. He stepped back again into the room at last, breathless and heart-broken.

"They will take no heed of me," he said. "For the moment they are mad. We must try to keep them out."

She crouched closer to him. Though her face was as white as marble, her hair dishevelled, and her eyes large with terror, she seemed more beautiful than ever. Only, Prince Maurice looked upon her for the first time in his life coldly. She had been dear to him, but Crersa and his people were dearer, and it seemed to him that the stain of treachery apart from all else must keep her an unclean thing for ever.

"Save me," she murmured. "You won't leave me. Promise."

And he remembered that she was a woman, and promised. A storm of bullets beat against the shuttered windows; splinters of wood flew into the room. He saw that they must gain an entrance before long, and he drew his sword, still wet with the blood of Menid Bey.

"Can we get out on the roof?" he asked. "We might escape from there."

She showed him the way, but the house stood by itself, and all around was an island of blank space.

"It's no use," he said. "We must face them boldly when they enter."

"You will not desert me?"

"No."

"Will you kiss me—once?"

She raised her pallid lips. He touched them with his, coldly. They made their way into the hall. He stood waiting with a revolver in his left hand and a sword in his right. He had thrown off his cloak, that the people might recognize at once his uniform. So they waited whilst the very walls about them seemed to reel, and the great door groaned upon its hinges. The servants had fled away terrified. They were alone in the place.

"Will they listen to you?" she whispered hoarsely.

"They may," he answered, "or they may not. If you know a prayer you had better say it."

Then there came the crash of falling timber, a yell of triumph, and the huge door fell inwards with half a dozen of the foremost sprawling upon it. Others trooped over them, a rush of cold air and a storm of snowflakes swept through the hall. But when they saw their prince standing there with drawn sword and flashing eyes they hesitated and looked

behind. Through their parted ranks came Hohenloff and Romakoff, with a small guard of the Palace soldiers. When they saw Prince Maurice, they, too, came to an amazed stop. But Hohenloff stood forward.

"You, too, sire," he cried; "you have discovered the traitress? Let us away with her to the ramparts. Arrest her, sergeant."

But the prince held out his hand.

"You are too hasty, Hohenloff," he said. "The countess is a subject of the country whose friendship we seek. She has demanded my protection, and I have granted it. She shall be tried if you will, but by proper tribunal."

But Hohenloff's face grew black as night.

"My prince," he said, "we have proofs of her guilt sufficient to justify us in hanging her a hundred times over. There is no tribunal for such a case. Our courts are broken up, and at any moment we may expect the Turks upon us. We have sworn to have her life first, and have it we will."

The sword of Prince Maurice touched the throat of the man who had sprung forward.

"The blood on my sword," he said, "is the blood of Menid Bey, the Turkish general, whom I have slain. Without him they will make no movement. We are safe for to-night, aye, and to-morrow. I make myself responsible for the keeping of this woman."

But a roar of discontent and angry mutterings arose from the throng, and Hohenloff grew pale with rage.

"We have promised the people," he cried, raising his voice, "that justice shall be done, and our word must be kept."

"And what of my word?" Prince Maurice answered. "I have pledged it to her husband for her safety during his absence, and I have pledged it to the lady herself. Officer of the Guards, I call upon you to protect your prince against this rabble."

The soldiers hesitated. From the throng of half-starved men came running two, who sprang upon the countess. But the woman's shriek of terror was mingled with their death cry, and once more Prince Maurice's sword was dripping with blood. With a cry of rage the rabble closed in. Then, indeed, it seemed as though the end was come. There were hundreds of them, armed and athirst for blood. Prince Maurice lowered his sword.

"You want a victim," he cried. "Very well, take the one who deserves death. This woman is innocent; I am the traitor."

There were cries of amazement, of disbelief. Prince Maurice waved them aside.

"It is I who would have bought your safety and my own," he cried. "I meant to give the city over to the Turks on favourable terms, for no hope remains of saving it. I would have done it so that the honour of our citizens might have been preserved. The countess was my tool, nothing else. Now you have foiled me. I have broken my word, and there will be no quarter."

Hohenloff rushed at him with his sword shortened.

"Traitor!" he cried.

But Prince Maurice struck him with his fist and he fell heavily upon the ground.

"Do what you will with me, my people," he cried, "but remember that the countess is innocent."

Romakoff turned towards them.

"Men of Crersa," he cried, "we have been betrayed, and by him in whom we trusted most. Let us not soil our hands with his blood. Send them forth to the Turks. Let them live and suffer the eternal torment of a dishonoured life. Close the gates of the city upon them, and then to the ramparts. For every Turk that enters Crersa another shall see hell."

"To the gates with them!" cried the mob. "Romakoff is right."

¶

SO in the twilight of a windy dawn the people of Crersa drove out their prince, and with him the woman whose life he had saved at such a bitter cost.

A Turkish sentry found them and dragged them into the camp. It was the old father of Menid Bey to whom Prince Maurice, without faltering, told his story, and when he had finished there was silence. The old man rose up, dry-eyed but terrible in his anger.

"The Countess of Merguillon," he said, "is our honoured guest, and we will find means to send her before long to her country. To you, Prince of Herania," he continued, "shall be dealt out such punishment as befits the murderer of my son, an

obstinate enemy, and a traitor to his natural suzerain, the Sultan."

"The Sultan is no suzerain of mine, nor ever has been," cried Prince Maurice. "Neither am I a traitor."

The old man ignored him.

"To-day," he said, "is a feast day with you Christian dogs. You shall spend it fittingly, I promise you. Away with him, guards."

The countess fell on her knees.

"My lord," she cried, "have mercy upon him. Your son fell in fair fight as I myself saw. If anyone is guilty of his death it is I, for he came to see me. You are a brave man and a soldier. You will not disgrace your country and your profession."

Menid Pasha thrust out a yellow, skinny forefinger towards her. There was no yielding in his face.

"Remove this woman," he said, "and see that she is securely lodged. As for the Prince of Herania, he shall help his people keep their festival."

When morning broke they who stood on the walls of the city beheld a strange sight. Not a mile away, between the camp of the enemy and the city, on a slight hillock, a rude cross of pinewood had been built, and upon the cross was stretched the figure of a man bound with cords. They gazed at it for long in wonder, and then a fearful whisper went round, and they gathered together, with pale faces and doubtful hearts. The man who was bound there, the victim of a slow and horrible death, was their Prince Maurice of Herania, their prince whom they had driven forth as a traitor. Would the Turks treat thus a friend? They fetched Romakoff and Hohenloff to gaze upon the hideous sight. Some of them even fancied that they heard faint cries of agony borne upon the icy wind. The people of the city grew restless, and many dark faces were turned upon Romakoff. The muttering grew into a storm. They gathered together at the southern gate, before his house, and there someone found a fainting woman, her delicate hands clasping the iron bars, her clothes sodden, her feet bloodstained. And until she opened her eyes and spoke, no one recognized the beautiful Countess of Merguillon.

She staggered to her feet. Whence came her sudden strength she could not tell, but she found voice and courage enough to stand up and speak so that her voice reached the farthest of them.

"Men of Crersa," she cried, "it is your prince whom they have bound there. He is no traitor. It is I alone who am guilty. I made him swear upon his honour to save me, so he took the blame of what he knew nothing of. It is the father of Menid Bey who has planned this horrible thing. Listen! Are you men to let your prince suffer a frightful death and never strike a blow?"

Then came hoarse cries.

"What can we do?"

"Their guns sweep the plain."

A spot of colour flared in her cheeks.

"Listen," she cried, "and I will tell you a secret. I will tell you why the Turks are so desperate, that they have done this thing to make you sue for peace. Their ammunition is spent. Their guns are useless as old iron."

A murmur of excitement thrilled through them.

"Men of Crersa," she said, "you have fought a valiant fight, and you are in desperate straits. Strike one great blow for your freedom and for your prince. I know a side of the Turkish camp where never a scout is posted, and where you can fall upon them without the slightest warning. Their guns are useless. You will cut them to pieces like sheep. Be men, and live to remember this night as the greatest in your history."

There was a roar of acclamation. They gave her food and wine, and under cover of darkness the men of Crersa—aye, and many of their women, too—stole out by a roundabout way to the Turkish camp. The story of that night is history—only before daylight a few scattered handfuls of Turks were flying across the mountains, leaving behind them a slaughtered host. Of the Turkish army nothing remained. When they looked for the woman who had led them out, they found her with a cold, motionless figure wrapped in her arms lying underneath the cross, striving to keep him alive by the warmth of her body.

¶

TWO years later all Paris was crowding to the reception of Madame la Comtesse, the first since her husband's death. Many guests had passed through her rooms and left. The evening grew late, and the last

guest had taken his leave. The comtesse was alone, when her major-domo, recalled to his duties, threw open once more the door of her apartment.

"His Royal Highness Prince Maurice of Herania."

A little cry broke from her lips—or was it a sob? He took her outstretched hands and looked down into her upturned, startled face.

"Are you so surprised?" he asked.

"Very," she answered. "I had no idea that you were in Paris."

"I arrived only last night."

"And Crersa?"

"Crersa is herself again. My ministers tell me that we need only one thing now—a princess. That is why I have come to Paris."

The colour flooded her cheeks and left them again almost immediately. She remained as though unable to speak.

"There is only one woman, Sophie, whom my people would welcome, and there is only one woman whom their prince could marry. So I have come to you. You will not send me away?"

She looked up at him radiant with happiness. Yet for a moment she hesitated.

"You are sure, Maurice, that your people——"

"They have canonized you," he answered, laughing. "They remember only that you are the woman who saved Crersa."

"And you—is that how you also remember me?"

He took her hand in his.

"I remember also," he said, "that you are the woman who saved my life, and the woman whom I have always loved."

Charon

By LORD DUNSANY

CHARON leaned forward and rowed. All things were one with his weariness.

It was not with him a matter of years or of centuries, but of wide floods of time, and an old heaviness and a pain in the arms that had become for him part of the scheme that the gods had made and was of a piece with Eternity.

If the gods had even sent him a contrary wind it would have divided all time in his memory into two equal slabs.

So grey were all things always where he was that if any radiance lingered a moment among the dead, on the face of such a queen perhaps as Cleopatra, his eyes could not have perceived it.

It was strange that the dead nowadays were coming in such numbers. They were coming in thousands where they used to come in fifties. It was neither Charon's duty nor his wont to ponder in his grey soul why these things might be. Charon leaned forward and rowed.

Then no one came for a while. It was not usual for the gods to send no one down from Earth for such a space. But the gods knew best.

Then one man came alone. And the little shade sat shivering on a lonely bench and the great boat pushed off.

Only one passenger; the gods knew best. And great and weary Charon rowed on and on beside the little, silent, shivering ghost.

And the sound of the river was like a mighty sigh that Grief in the beginning had sighed among her sisters, and that could not die like the echoes of human sorrow failing on earthly hills, but was as old as time and the pain in Charon's arms.

Then the boat from the slow, grey river loomed up to the coast of Dis and the little, silent shade still shivering stepped ashore, and Charon turned the boat to go wearily back to the world. Then the little shadow spoke, that had been a man.

"I am the last," he said.

No one had ever made Charon smile before, no one before had ever made him weep.

The Bird of Paradise

"'Tis always certain that Eve will agree with Adam . . ."

By JOHN RUSSELL

AS you come east through the Archipelago you hear talk of rice and coffee and tobacco. And, keeping on, you learn of pepper and benzoin and tin and copra in separate lingos, each different and curious after its kind. But if you still hold your eastward way along the line you will come at last to a port where they trade in birds of paradise and count by the skins of orange and emerald and the little kingbird that looks like a red-hot cinder dropping from the sky—and this is the most curious talk of all.

So it was with Andrew Harben, travelling out of the West and counting that day lost whose low descending sun saw him twice in the same place. He went questing across the degrees of latitude until he came to the Spice Islands, and there, at the ancient town of Ternate, they showed him into a room that flamed with colours, as if all the rainbows of the seas had been caught and graded and hung up for sale.

"These are the birds of paradise," they told him; "the shyest and rarest of all creatures. And their cost will average so much, and their quality such and such, and the market is rising and the crop short."

Andrew Harben looked and listened.

"I have come to the right place," he said. "Here is the trade for me. You can have your boxes and bales and billets. But to snare a feathered poem and gain a fair profit on living jewels of the air—this is a business that should be worth the time and the trouble."

So he called for the fat Dutch half-caste who owned the shop and put it to him.

"Which is the prize bird of the lot?"

"Z' Superb is very scarce," said Jan Van Bol, "and also z' Red Magnificent and z' Epimaque. And I do not get more zan two dozen of zese yellow twelve wires in a year. I will make you a bargain."

"It's not your price to sell I want," said Andrew Harben, "but to buy."

"You have birds for me to buy?" blinked Van Bol.

"Not yet. But I will have. I'm just arranging the law of supply and demand ahead of time, which is the essence of economy. What do *you* think?"

The merchant ran his eye up the height of Andrew Harben and along the breadth of him.

"I zink maybe you might kill five-six islanders before zey get your head. With good luck. But in ze end you would make a very handsome decoration on z' canoe house. Also—z' sun is very hot to-day."

"I thank you for your honest expressions," said Andrew Harben. "But I cut my teeth long ago, and I'm neither crazy nor drunk. I'm worth a hundred pounds cash and twelve stone stripped, and I'm looking to invest it all on a worthy venture. Now go ahead and tell me about the birds."

Jan Van Bol observed him again, and because of something he saw in the cool grey eyes, it may be, or because he was truly a courteous gentleman, he explained more carefully how paradise skins come from the remotest spots on earth, the jungles of New Guinea and certain inaccessible isles to the north; how they are traded from tribe to tribe and from coast to coast until they drift in the way of commerce to points where dealers can lay hold of them. He was very patient, and Andrew Harben was patient too, and accepted a drink in the back veranda, and when all was said returned to his first question.

The half-caste sat silent for a time.

"I will tell you a strange zing," he said at last. "You ask me z' choicest bird. Once a year comes to me six skins of a bird of paradise which is like no other bird of paradise of zem all. It has no name, because few have ever seen it, and never in its living life. But it is imperial—purple and gold—dark as dusk and beautiful as z'dawn. Ah! Zis for true is z' bird of paradise!"

" Six skins, you say ? "

" No more, no less. Zey are worth much, much money ; so much as people will pay ; forty, fifty times z' price of common ones. For I get all zat come, and never comes more zan half a dozen."

" And where are they found ? "

Jan Van Bol shook his head.

" Zat is z' strange zing. Mostly we know z' region of zese birds : one from Mysol, another from z' Arus or D'Entrecasteaux or z' Horseshoe Mountains. But zis—I do not know, no man knows, where it is found. My agent at Waigiu, he sends z' skins. But he knows not. And z' natives with which he trades, zey know not. And z' wild sea gipsies with which zey trade, *zey* know not either."

" That won't do," said Andrew Harben. " In this day of wireless and ocean patrol all yarns must come to bearings. We don't go sailing after fountains of youth nor mountains of ruby any more, nor yet the land of the whangdoodle."

" No ? " smiled Van Bol. " And yet you have travelled so far yourself."

" I'm not looking for fairy tales."

" Ah ! Well, I zought you might be a man who has seen enough to know z' fairy tale is A B C to z' truth."

Andrew Harben sat frowning out over the harbour, where the junks and proas go toddling in and out all day, manned with crews of many races, bound for obscure ports on unguessed errands, just as they toddled in the time when Rameses kept the westernmost outpost, and as they will toddle still when the rest of the world has all been civilized into wearing frock coats.

" What is the story—the legend ? "

" Zere is none. Why should zere be ? You have overpassed z' places where everybody is nicely labelled and z' neighbours call z' police if zey do not know all your business. Here are islands—zousands of zem—hid away among reefs and currents you shall find on no chart. And here are peoples—hundred zousands—whose ways and doings and secrets you shall read in no report. Somewhere, somewhere is an island where lives z' purple bird of paradise. Nobody can say better zan zat."

" Show me one," said Andrew Harben.

Then Jan Van Bol brought a sandalwood chest, and opened it jealously and set it before his visitor. And Andrew Harben looked down into a bursting bomb of plumage, brilliant as a firework. The bird was mounted, and might itself have been the size of a sparrow. Its breast was laid with tiny gold plates, deepening to bronze, and from that centre flared great tufts of ribbon feathers, deep purple at the base and rippling up brighter and more bright to a blazing magenta—a veritable passion in colour.

Andrew Harben winked and shut down the lid.

" I will find that island," he said quickly. " And I will bring you a boatload of these skins."

The merchant laughed and took the chest in his arms again. " No, no. It is only a fairy story. I wished to amuse you ; we see few travellers here. Besides—do you know ?—the bird of paradise is the shyest and wildest of all creatures."

" Thanks," said Andrew Harben. " I heard all that before. And now about getting a passage to Waigiu. Could I pick up a small cutter, seaworthy but cheap ? "

¶

SOME three months later Andrew Harben made another stop in his eastward journeying. But he had no choice of it, and he could not have told his whereabouts within the dab of his thumb on a map. He was surely beyond the Moluccas, and probably near Gilolo Strait, and vaguely to the north of Dampier. For further directions he could refer only to the currents and the winds that had spun his little craft like a whip-top—currents swift as a mill-race and winds fitful as a woman's temper. He had seen various natives and many shores, and had visited a few, dodging spears and shipwreck with equal good fortune. But this time a howling gale drove him all night through a nest of narrow, basaltic islets, where the waters lifted snarling from rows and rows of long black teeth, and at last he struck.

He came ashore in the morning on a bit of rough beach strewn with basalt cobbles, and had all he could do to drag himself out of the wash before he should be ground among them. When he woke again the sun was beating on his head and a great bull voice was beating in his ears.

A man stood over him, a huge, bearded man, belted in a simple cincture and burned all over to the shade of an old meerschaum pipe. His eyes were like blue china buttons, and his hair hung lank as marline, bleached a rusty red and shingled right round. " Get

up ! " he cried at Andrew Harben, immediately adding : " And what t' deuce are you doing here ? "

Andrew Harben stared in disbelief, but the amazing apparition kicked him painfully with a bare foot as hard as a hoof.

" Will you answer, before I stamp your ribs in ? "

Andrew Harben was starved and bruised, wrung by fever, and with no more pith in his limbs than so much kelp. " What kind of an answer can I make ? " he hiccuped.

" Poor enough, I do believe," agreed the other, thrusting a lip at him. " A likely looking pirate ! Are there any more of y' ? There's no wreck on the reef that I could see."

" None. I came alone."

" You came ? Then you meant to come. Answer quick and don't stop to lie."

Andrew Harben had no hint which way to take this white savage. He spoke of his voyage as a trading trip, and the other questioned him sharply, with a black scowl of suspicion.

" Trading ? " he echoed at last. " I've a good notion what kind of trading. You're one of these fortune hunters, eh ? Let any man find a quiet spot to his liking, with perhaps a private plum of his own, and next thing all the beachcombing loafers in the four oceans are crowding him. Yes, if 'twas on the Pole itself. I'll tell you now, I been expecting someone of your kind. I been waiting for you."

" You have the advantage of me there," said Andrew Harben politely.

" Aye," nodded the big man, in grim scorn. " You should have brought along a company, and maybe a machine-gun or two. Why, man, did you think you could cut out this island by your little lonely ? The likes of you ? "

" If I knew more about it I could say better."

" You'll know more in due time. To be sure, I was going to break your neck first off. 'Twas the king so ordered, but the high judge put in a plea and the court has just decided to keep you alive by way of having a bit of fun."

He had a most unpleasant grin.

" Who are all these people ? " asked Andrew Harben, wondering what strange tribe he had fallen in with.

" Me," said the other. " O'Ryan."

" Orion ! " repeated Andrew Harben faintly, and wondered if his mind were going, while a tag-end of schoolboy fable flickered in his bewildered memory :

" Begirt with many a blazing star
Stood the great giant Algebar,
Orion, hunter of the beast."

" Any relation to the Pleiades ? "

" Jim O'Ryan, late second mate on the schooner *Merry Friend*," said the big man simply. " And no relation to anything else on earth. I'm not wanted east nor west, so you need sniff after no crime, if that's what you mean. This is my island, by all right. You're nothing but a sneaking trespasser, and you'd best be civil if you know what's good for you."

So he took Andrew Harben and slung him under one arm. This was easier than it would have been three months before, because Andrew Harben had lost forty pounds of his twelve stone and his ribs stuck out in a rack.

They climbed the beach and a hill beyond to a little clearing in the lush tropic growth, where stood a house very neatly built of bamboos. Before the wide veranda sat a girl with two long, smooth, black braids framing her brown face, and clothed in one gorgeous purple garment that hung at a shoulder and clung across her breast. She stared at the appearance of Andrew Harben with slow amazement, and he stared back with a special vivid sensation of his own. For the purple garment on that girl, cunningly sewed and joined, was made all of bird skins, of paradise bird skins, of those same imperial paradise bird skins which he had come so far to find.

The smooth grain of the feathers ran down slantwise, each separate skin like a little spreading golden bubble on the sweep of glorious colour, and the edge turned up in a soft froth of the brightest tail ribbons. Some three hundred parts had gone to the making of the piece, and there could be nothing else like it in the world—not cloaks of ermine nor coronation robes—and here he saw it worn by a chit of a wild thing on a lost isle by Gilolo.

Such was the first thought of Andrew Harben, for a native woman is only a native woman ; but a dress like this was a fortune, and it was only when she stood up and looked him in the face that he fairly saw the girl herself. And then he saw that the beauty of the garment was no more than a fitting garb for beauty of the flesh, and so the lesser after all.

She was brown, of Malay type, but the delicate rose tint of brown that puts mere white to shame, and her little red mouth was crisp cut as a flower. In those jet eyes under sharp and arching brows there smouldered secret embers of emotion, now veiled as by smoke, now darting quick lights, and her whole lithe body was vibrant, like that of the bird she simulated, with the spring and exuberance of life. She spoke, and something seemed to reach down and grip a chord of strings inside Andrew Harben and set them singing all at once. He did not care what she said—though that was curious enough—but only that she should go on in her quaint, slid speech that had the quaintest exotic charm.

" Then you did *not* bury them all ! " she cried, and gazed at Andrew Harben, where he stood limp beside the big man, as at a thing out of nature.

O'Ryan gave a bark of laughter.

" You did tell me long ago you buried them—every one," she said, with one little hand, like a fluted sea shell, pressed hard to her breast.

" How d'you know I didn't dig this lad up again ? " asked O'Ryan, amused at her agitation. " Who d'you think it would be, now ? The cap'n ? But he never could 'a' grown so monstrous thin. Or the cook, hey ? But see how tall he's got ! "

He dropped Andrew Harben to a mat, and she came forward step by step until she touched the stranger lightly on the cheek. " He is alive ! It is a man ! "

She drew back as if stung, and O'Ryan laughed consumedly, baring big yellow dog teeth.

" Aye, what's left. And a poor specimen at that. Get some food, N'goma. And hurry, now."

But she seemed incapable of movement, so great was her wonder, and he caught and flung her carelessly away by the wrist. With a cry she stooped quickly over his hand. He gave a furious bellow of pain and dashed her to the ground.

" What's this of it ? " and " She bit me ! " he said, but not so much enraged as sheer astounded. He stood looking stupidly at the wound, where it ran red, and then down at the girl.

She did not cringe or bow her glossy head, nor even glance at the big man, for her regard was still fixed on Andrew Harben.

" You blamed little spitfire," said O'Ryan, without heat, and gathered her braids close in his grip. " What made you do that, hey ? You never dared before—no, nor thought of such. What's come to you ? "

" I want him ! " she cried passionately. " Do not bury him away in the ground with the others. He is a new white man. I want him to keep."

" Oh, y' do ? " said O'Ryan, at this simple demand. " Well, you seem to know your own mind, at least. I had no idea I was bringing a present that would strike your fancy so close. Well, well——"

He twisted her around and peered down into her eyes, and while he was thus absorbed Andrew Harben set up a small diversion on his own account. As Andrew Harben saw it, the girl had come to his rescue against the common despot, and his duty was now plain to do the gallant thing. So he gathered himself together and made an earnest attempt to brain the big man with a half-burned stake from the fire. O'Ryan turned to this second surprise with a joyous bellow of relief, and put aside his feeble pass and hit him square with a fist the size and colour of a smoked ham. He went down and stayed down.

" Again ! " offered O'Ryan. " Oh, man, that was good. Try again. The first fair wallop I've had on the end of my arm for three years—let alone the niggers, that never would stand fair. Will y' fight, then ? "

" I can't," choked Andrew Harben, and the last thing he heard was the girl's eager pleading :

" Don't spoil him. Do not take him away from me. I will be very angry——"

¶

AND that was the beginning of the romance of Andrew Harben on the island of the bird of paradise, which was singular in its way, but no more than many things that come to pass in quite ordinary fashion among those forgotten corners of the seas. For a time he was very sick, having suffered much in his search. The two, man and woman, nursed him through with every care, and when he was able to be about once more he had an explanation with Jim O'Ryan, who squatted beside him like a monstrously muscled Buddha.

" You're only a thieving buccaneer," began the big man thoughtfully, " and I misdoubt you'll ever understand what I have to say or what manner of folk you have to deal with. How should you ? You came

to this wild and lovely garden of mine to rob it for dirty gain, and you stink of cities and people and marts of trade. But me—Jim O'Ryan—I left all that long ago, and I found my little Eden here as you see it, and so I mean to keep it while I live. D'you think how much chance you have of ever getting away again with the secret?"

Andrew Harben held the air of listening, but behind his lids he was quietly taking stock of weight and height and reach. It was borne upon him that at his best he would never be able to stand toe to toe against such a giant.

"This is the island you were seeking," O'Ryan went on, "as well I know. The purple birds are here. Sorry and bitter sorry am I that ever I traded one of those pretty skins to bring hungry devils like yourself sniffing and smelling for the place. But what could I do? I had to have knives and tobacco and the like, and the Bajaus would take nothing else.

"Meanwhile, you have added a fresh interest to local politics, and why should I deny it? My real mistake was not cracking your neck first off, as I meant, and more's the pity, because after N'goma had laid eyes on your foxy mug, why, then it was too late, d'you see? Yes, that was my error. I forgot the child had seen no other man but me for years, and so by nature she took this notion to you as a sort of new toy—heaven mend her taste!—being no wiser. As she might have said in another place—'Jim, dear, my heart is broke entirely for that bit of a poodle dog yonder.'

"Now, I do not know what your domestic experience may have been," he added with perfect gravity, "but it is in my mind that a woman must be allowed her whims to the possible limit, otherwise squally weather and storm signals. Therefore, and because I'm all for peace myself, I will let you live, such as you are, and N'goma shall have her poodle. Are you not grateful?"

Andrew Harben was busied with rather different sentiments, but said nothing.

"But," continued the other over a monitory pipe stem, "*but* you will get poor pickings hereabouts. You may have a great idea of your own wickedness and a good conceit of yourself—and I hope you have, for you shall be brought very low. I owe that to N'goma. I have warned her what you want and what manner of a thief of the world you are, and she does not believe me, the innocent. She looks on you as something grand. Well, then, she'll know better as she sees you shown up and put in your proper place. 'Tis always certain that Eve will agree with Adam in due time that the serpent is a dirty fellow.

"One more thing. There is no gun on this island, and whenever you want to kill me you'll have to try with your hands. You can try, and I can smash the face of you again, and so on. It will be poor sport but some consolation, maybe."

"And what else can I do?" asked Andrew Harben.

"Why, such jobs as I set you," chuckled O'Ryan. "There's much to be done in the way of public improvements. You'll be a fine figure of a genteel adventurer digging drains or suchlike."

Andrew Harben revolted.

"Do you think you can keep me as a slave?" he cried, springing up.

"Aye, that's just what I think!" roared O'Ryan, bulking over him with sudden exultant violence. Deliberately he raised his fist and knocked the other across the clearing again like a bag of rags. "For slave is what you shall be till you prove yourself a better man than me, d'you see?"

And he had his way of it in the end, for that is what Andrew Harben became—slave to a great brute of a white castaway and to a little, purple-clad witch of a brown girl with eyes as dark as dusk and beautiful as the dawn.

Under the side of a black, volcanic cliff the ground fell sharply to a deep ravine all fringed with vines and thorny creepers and the climbing arum with its poisonous red fruits. Here O'Ryan dropped Andrew Harben like a bear in a pit, and made him a little hut and gave him a wooden spade and a bucket and bade him clear a small reluctant spring that took its rise under the rock. And here Andrew Harben toiled and sweated day by day. At noon N'goma brought his food and lowered it in a basket, and then would sit and talk with him, perched at the brink; and Andrew Harben would stand in the slippery clay and gaze up at her, unattainable. This was O'Ryan's scheme to meet her fancy for the new toy.

In their talks she told Andrew Harben all her simple story. Her parents had been native servants to an English missionary in Gilolo who had taken passage for Salawati with his household aboard the ill-fated trading schooner *Merry Friend*. When the craft was wrecked in the west monsoon, Jim

O'Ryan bore her safely through the surf, and of all the ship's company only these two came ashore alive. They found the island uninhabited, but rich in fruits and sago palm. It suited them—presumably it suited some deep, unsatisfied instinct in the sailor; the girl was merely his at command. They built a house, they set up the domestic hearth together, and there they had since lived the familiar idyll of primitive content. Through three years she had seen no other human creature except the woolly Bajaus, the sea gipsies, that coasted by once a year to trade for skins. And even these explorers never dared set foot on the island, having had their lesson once for all at the hands of O'Ryan—B'sar, the Mighty One—whom they feared as a great devil—devil and lord of the storm.

"But have you never wished to get away—to go out into the big world?" demanded Andrew Harben.

"No," she said hesitantly. "B'sar did tell me all about it, many times."

He marvelled what pictures of life and men that rude wanderer of the ports had thus drawn for the instruction of such a companion.

"It is all trade and noise and crowded places. There is not enough food or room to breathe, and so the people are always stealing and lying and fighting to take away something from each other. It is only to work and sleep and fight and die. Nobody has a land to himself like this, but everybody wants one, and if they did know they would come and take ours away. No—I do not wish to, and B'sar he never will go out there."

"Then he owns you," said Andrew Harben, frowning.

"He is the master," she answered. She called it "masther" in her soft, sliding speech, with the strangest touch of brogue.

Now, Andrew Harben had known many women and many different kinds, and this was a woman of almost incredible simplicity. It should have been easy to follow up the emotional shock of his arrival and her childlike wonder that never could have enough of gazing on him. But he found the most unexpected difficulties. She seemed to have no knowledge of the merest formulas of the game.

"Do you love him?"

"What is that?" she asked, wrinkling her brow at him over the leafy creeper by which she clung. "Sometimes I comb his beard. I would like to comb yours. You have such a pretty yellow beard—all curly. When you were sleeping I did comb it, so soft and curly—Daari!"

She brought out this name in delighted discovery; she had never been able to make anything of his own.

"Daari is what I shall call you. Is it not pretty? In my own talk it means white. You are so white on your skin, not like B'sar. Daari—Daari——!"

She called to him and stretched her little hands down, and he could only swear at his helplessness.

"Say that you hate him, then," he begged. "Does he beat you? Does he treat you cruelly?"

"Sometimes," she nodded, pursing up her tiny lips with a laugh behind them. "When I am bad."

"Then you must hate him," he explained earnestly.

"Words. You talk such funny words, Daari. Love—hate—I cannot see these things. Only I am N'goma and he *is* B'sar."

"He must have taught you. You say he has taught you everything."

"Yes, I do know, but I do not understand. What use are so many and so hard words?"

"If I could get out of here some dark night—and you would help me—I might show you."

She drew back, frightened. "Oh, no, Daari. He did put you here!"

"I saw you fight against him yourself."

"Yes—yes, for you," she cried, with the lights leaping in her eyes. "I wished so much to have you, and I was so afraid he would put you with those dead sailors he did bury after the wreck. Oh, Daari—I did think you were one of those sailors in the ground. How could I know?" The rounded purple figure shrank and quivered among the fronds, but presently came trickling laughter as her face peeped out at him again. "But you are not. You are alive! Oh, I am glad!"

"I might as well be buried as sunk in this hole," he answered bitterly.

But she would not hearken at first to any hint of escape, and she seemed quite satisfied to have saved him whole, and to smile and to chatter with him now. He met only an exasperating innocence, so different from the facile coquetry he had been led to hope. She did not know the meaning of a grievance, nor of treachery, deceit, nor

lawless desire. He had to start at the beginning. It was a curious wooing.

"You would find many things very different in the world than you think, N'goma. There a woman has much happiness that your master has hidden from your knowledge. Listen! Do you know really why I came? To take you away. Yes, I came for you, to hunt you here in your jungle and to bring you out with me to places where you will be seen and admired. You are so beautiful. Men will stare and give many rich presents for the sake of seeing you near them. Women will envy you and wish to own your beauty. None is so beautiful as you, N'goma."

Thus spake Andrew Harben in guileful phrase, and the girl was troubled.

"Is this true, Daari?"

"Didn't O'Ryan tell you himself that I came seeking the bird of paradise?" he asked, watching her.

She nodded.

"You are that bird."

"Tell me about the big world," she sighed, and he talked as subtly as he knew, while she listened with her wide gaze dwelling dreamily upon him.

¶

HE could flatter himself on progress, and in another way, too, he steadily improved his case. The air of the isle was sweet and nimble, and the food was good, and daily he felt his strength come back. Also he began in lonely hours to practise an art at which he had once been an adept, certain tricks of man-handling that are worth much more than weight or muscle. Near his hut grew a springy vine the thickness of a cable, and by this he used to test his power and quickness in twisting or striking. There was one odd thing about these manœuvres, and it is the true secret of the art. When he struck he never used the closed hand, only the open edge of it, which gradually he toughened to a ridge of callosity.

Meanwhile his chief trial was the overseeing by O'Ryan, who attended to that congenial task at all hours, dropping down a knotted rope from the top of the cliff like a huge ape.

"Well, my piratin' squireen," he would greet the other, "and how is the luck to-day? Have you dug any gold or precious stones from that rock? By Jove, you're not worth your keep. Call yourself a fortune hunter, and you handle a shovel no brisker than that? Dig into it, y' lazy scowbanker!"

It was then his custom on the least excuse or none at all to knock Andrew Harben headlong with a full swing on the jaw, an operation in which he took recondite and unwearied delight.

"Will y' fight?" he offered.

But Andrew Harben, with the surge of madness in his throat, lay still in the clay and said nothing, biding his time.

And that time came at last on a day when he finally persuaded the girl to one little disloyalty.

"Only drop that rope and leave it hanging after O'Ryan is gone," he pleaded. "Such a small thing to do for me. And then—I can meet you in the twilight, N'goma. I have much to tell I have never told you. But this I must whisper—whisper with my lips against your ear. Won't you let me free for just that sweet moment—that is all I ask of you?"

She wavered, she yielded, and when Andrew Harben was alone he smiled, recalling, it may be, some of those many other women he had known. And presently he laid hold of the vine beside his hut so that it snapped in his grasp. Whereupon he felt himself a man once more, and sprang to the waiting rope and climbed up from the pit, ready to make his trial.

It was close upon nightfall when he came out at the rim of the island. He moved along the shore towards the cobbled beach until at a sheer turn he came suddenly upon N'goma where she sat, chin in hand, gazing to seaward, a solitary blot of full-hearted colour against the fading glow of the west. Quietly he crept up on the rock beside her so that she was not aware of him until his shoulder touched hers. "You have come out," she breathed. "He will kill you!"

"Perhaps," said Andrew Harben. "But it's worth the chance."

"I did do a very wrong thing to let you out. I was a bad girl. B'sar would not like it. Why did you make me?"

There were tears on her cheek as he drew her to him. She lay tense and resistant in his arms, and through the feathered garment so warm and velvet sleek he could feel the pulsing of her body. "My little wild bird——"

He lured her with murmured trifles that to him were only the common coin of such traffic, but to her must have been all tokens new and wonderful, until for an instant she

seemed wholly overcome—then slipped suddenly free.

She made as if to run, but turned again and came back with the same swiftness and caught hold of him, and her breath was quick on his neck.

"You must go away—now, now you must go. Sitting here and waiting, I did think of this, the only thing to do. Since you will not stay in the pit you must leave the island, else B'sar surely will find out and kill you. Better, much better, I should lose you—I should not have you any more."

Her fingers lingered upon him in shy caress. "A boat is down there by the lagoon—your boat. It is ready. You will go back to your world again, Daari—before he knows. Be quick!"

Andrew Harben smiled down at her.

"Come, then," he said. "We will go."

But she shook her head and shunned the west with a gesture.

"I cannot. I should die, Daari. What do I know of those many places and these people out there? No. Here is my home. And besides, here is B'sar!"

"You would have me, N'goma?"

She looked up at him with veiled, unfathomable gaze.

"Yes, I would like to have you always—so—a man strange and different and white, Daari, to see and to talk with——"

Andrew Harben lost his smile. His hold tightened brusquely, and there was no escaping him now, for he crushed her close and tilted up her face and kissed her hard and full on the lips, the rude seal of possession. When he let her go she slid upon the rock with a little quavering cry. "Go down by the boat," he gave his curt command. "Wait for me there—I shan't be long."

He turned and strode away inland.

"N'goma! N'goma!"

It was O'Ryan's bellow from above.

"Call her," said Andrew Harben grimly. "For the last time. We'll have an end to this now."

They met at the edge of the clearing.

"You——?" rumbled O'Ryan, amazed.

"I'm here for that fight," said Andrew.

"By way of suicide?"

"By way of settlement. It's true I came seeking your treasure, O'Ryan, and now it's mine and I'm ready to take it, for I will share a prize with no man. When all's done I'll bury you decent by your shipmates—and the stakes go to the winner."

Standing there wide-legged, the other roared with sheer delight.

"Don't tempt me! D'y' mean to a finish?"

Andrew Harben stripped off his shirt.

"To a finish."

For a moment they stood crouched apart, the one a knotted Colossus, the other lean and fine-drawn and tough as a root. The firelight made play upon their limbs and struck ruddy flecks from eyeball and glistening beard. For roof they had the vast tropic night and for ring the sea, and when at last they came together the long breakers on the reef rolled in plaudits; but no living thing saw the great fight between Jim O'Ryan and Andrew Harben on that lost island of the Gilolo Strait for the purple bird of paradise.

It was short and cyclonic. Andrew Harben did not try to avoid the rush, only dodging a fist and ducking in under and closing so that O'Ryan clipped him about the ribs. The other would have held him there, but he forced a back heel, and they went to the ground in a tangle. He needed no better chance for those few tricks he had so sedulously practised on the jungle vine.

He used only his thumb and the edge of his hand, swordwise, and he aimed for the armpit, the tendon below the ear, and the nerves of the upper arm. O'Ryan did not know the guard for those deadly jabs, made with the speed of a lashing snake. He writhed in agony and spun around, unaware of the grip on his wrist until it was forced back and back and his own weight snapped the bone.

They staggered up, and the big man's right arm hung collapsed. But he charged again, trumpeting his wrath so that the night was stunned with it. Andrew Harben dropped to meet him on one knee, catching his broken arm. He whirled in mid-air and pitched forward, and the whole giant bulk of him crashed sprawling on the point of the shoulder and crumpled and lay very still. Almost at the same instant appeared N'goma.

The darkness seemed to part as a curtain to let her through, and she was there, a slender column of purple like an incandescence. Hard-breathed and shaken as he was, with the red mist of battle still upon him, Andrew Harben saw and hailed her in the fierce ecstasy of his triumph—the reward, the gage of victory.

"I win! N'goma—— I have won!"

He came to her with opened arms.

Before he could touch her, without any warning a knife flashed high in her hand, and only his wincing, instinctive start struck it aside from his breast. But the glitter of the blade was not more daunting than her fury of grief as she flung past him and threw herself upon the outstretched body of Jim O'Ryan. "You have killed him! Killed the master. Oh, kill me—kill me too!"

She caught the victim in her young arms, murmuring broken endearments, fondling the big head, lavishing every extravagance of devotion and remorse.

"What's this? What's come to you?" stammered Andrew Harben, in the very phrase of O'Ryan himself. "N'goma——"

Her face was the lovely and appalling mask of anger.

"He is my man!" she cried. "My man to me. Who are you to kill my man? Because I did like to play and smile—because I was bad and a fool just that little, you think I would give him for *you*? Get away—get away!"

She turned back to her man, her mate, her master—the one big thing, the abiding fact of her primitive life.

Never had she seemed more desirable, this woman to whom Andrew Harben had thought to teach the meaning of love and hate. The lees of his fighting wrath were stirred again, and clouded up to his brain with brutal impulse. There was none to hold him back now. He had adventured and striven and fought to have his single right to her, that graceful creature so lithe and firm and rounded, so passionately alive. Yes, and his right to the one glorious purple garment that covered her. It was worth a king's ransom, and here it only served as cloak for the provocative brown beauty of a native girl. That, too, was part of his pride. He caught her up and laid one hot hand on the feathered drapery to strip it quite from her——

She saw his meaning, and did not flinch. She had learned by now that O'Ryan was not dead nor likely to die, and she looked at the victor with a level, withering flame from her wonderful great eyes. "So that is what you wanted," she said in slow and biting speech. "B'sar did tell me you were only a thief. You came for the skins, and the rest was all a lie. Steal them, then. Here I am, without help. Take what you want, and then go back where you came from and tell them you have won the bird of paradise—you wicked, wicked white man!"

She stood before him and offered herself, proud, secure of her soul's own freedom, utterly fearless and utterly contemptuous. And Andrew Harben, who had known many women of many kinds, stood baffled and abashed before this wild one whose emotions should have been so easy, whose ways should have been so simple—and were, perhaps, though inscrutable still. . . .

¶

IT may have been a month later when he made the ancient port of Ternate in the Spice Islands once more. He was westward bound, on the back track.

Jan Van Bol greeted him with courtesy, "Here you are again!" he cried. "Ah-ha, you bring your head at least. Zat is good. And what else? Have you learned anything of z' bird of paradise?"

"Yes," said Andrew Harben solemnly, "I have learned that the bird of paradise is the choicest and rarest of living things."

"Ah!" blinked the half-caste. "Well? And z' rest——?"

"The rest? The rest," said Andrew Harben, "is a fairy tale."

The **September** Issue of *The Argosy* will be on Sale **August 7th**

VICENTE BLASCO IBANEZ'

Latest Story:

"THE SUN THAT SHINES ON THE DEAD"

Will be published in this number

ALWAYS LOOK FOR AN ARGOSY ON THE COVER.

The Open Road

The Undisturbed Silence of the Heart

GIVE me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point on yonder rooling cloud, I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sunburnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like "sunken wreck and sunless treasuries," burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit as dull commonplaces, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence.

William Hazlitt.

A Cooling Interlude

TO see the wind, with a man his eyes, it is impossible, the nature of it is so fine, and subtle, yet this experience of the wind had I once myself, and that was in the great snow that fell four years ago: I rode in the highway betwixt *Topcliffe-upon-Swale*, and *Borowe Bridge*, the way being somewhat trodden afore, by wayfaring men. The fields on both sides were plain and lay almost yard deep with snow, the night afore had been a little frost, so that the snow was hard and crusted above. That morning the sun shone bright and clear, the wind was whistling aloft, and sharp according to the time of the year. The snow in the highway lay loose and trodden with horse feet: so as the wind blew, it took the loose snow with it, and made it so slide upon the snow in the field which was hard and crusted by reason of the frost overnight, that thereby I might see very well, the whole nature of the wind as it blew that day. And I had a great delight and pleasure to mark it, which maketh me now far better to remember it.

Roger Ascham.

Rest Your Limbs, O Wayfarers

GO and rest your limbs here for a little under the junipers, O wayfarers, by Hermes, Guardian of the Way, not in crowds, but those of you whose knees are tired with heavy toil and thirst, after traversing a long road; for there a breeze and a shady seat and the fountain under the rock will lull your toil-wearied limbs: and having so escaped the midday breath of the autumnal dogstar, as is right, honour to Hermes of the Ways.

Author Unknown. (Translated by J. W. Mackail.)

A Record from the Diary

SO to our coach, and through Mr. Minnes's wood, and looked upon Mr. Evelyn's house; and so over the common, and through Epsom town to our inn, in the way stopping a poor woman with her milk-pail, and in one of our gilt tumblers did drink our bellyfuls of milk, better than any cream, but it was sour, and so had no pleasure in it; and so paid our reckoning, and took coach, it being about seven at night, and passed and saw the people walking with their wives and children to take the air, and we set out for home, the sun by and by going down, and we in the cool of the evening all the way with much pleasure home, talking and pleasing ourselves with the pleasure of this day's work.

Samuel Pepys.

The Beauty of the Road

ON we go! past the glazier's pretty house, with its porch and its filbert walk: along the narrow lane bordered with elms, whose fallen leaves have made the road one yellow carpet: past that little farmhouse with the horse-chestnut trees before, glowing like oranges: past the whitewashed school on the other side, gay with October roses: past the park, and the lodge, and the mansion, where once dwelt the great Earl of Clarendon—and now the rascal has began to discover that Samuel Long and his whip are a mile off, and that his mistress is driving him, and he slackens his pace accordingly. Perhaps he feels the beauty of the road just here, and goes slowly to enjoy it.

Mary Russell Mitford. ("Our Village.")

A Charm for the Senses

FOR peregrination charms our senses with such unspeakable and sweet variety, that some count him unhappy that never travelled, a kind of prisoner, and pity his case, that from his cradle to his old age beholds the same still; still, still the same, the same.

Robert Burton.

The Open Road

AFOOT and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path leading me wherever I choose.
Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road.

Walt Whitman.

Beyond the Hurry of the Capital

INDEED, I do not know a more enviable condition of life, than that of an English gentleman, of sound judgment and good feelings, who passes the greater part of his time on an hereditary estate in the country. From the excellence of the roads and the rapidity and exactness of the public conveyances, he is enabled to command all the comforts and conveniences, all the intelligence and novelties of the capital, while he is removed from its hurry and distraction. He has ample means of occupation and amusement within his own domains; he may divinify his time by rural occupations, by rural sports, by study, and by the delight of friendly society, collected within his own hospitable halls.

Washington Irving.

Rest

AS I walked but slowly, the night waned apace. The labourers of the day were all retired to rest; the lights were out in every cottage: no sounds were heard but of the shrilling cock, and the deep-mouthed watch-dog at hollow distance. I approached my little abode of pleasure, and, before I was within a furlong of the place, our honest mastiff came running to welcome me.

Oliver Goldsmith.

On These Roads You May Walk for a Year

THE surrounding country is smooth and green, full of undulations; and pleasant country roads strike through it in every direction, bound for distant towns and villages, yet in no hurry to reach them. On these roads the lark in summer is continually heard; nests are plentiful in the hedges and dry ditches; and on the grassy banks, and at the feet of the bowed dikes, the blue-eyed speedwell smiles its benison on the wayfarer. On these roads you may walk for a year and encounter nothing more remarkable than the country cart, troops of tawny children from the woods, laden with primroses, and at long intervals—for people in this district live to a ripe age—a black funeral creeping in from some remote hamlet; and to this last the people reverently doff their hats and stand aside. Death does not walk about here often, but when he does, he receives as much respect as the squire himself. Everything round one is unhurried, quiet, moss-grown and orderly.

ALEXANDER SMITH.

I SHALL go on the gypsies' road,
The road that has no ending;
For the sedge is brown on the lone lake side,
The wild geese eastward tending.

I shall go as the unfettered wave
From shore to shore, forgetting
The grief that lies 'neath a roof-tree's shade,
The years that bring regretting.

No law shall dare my wandering stay,
No man my acres measure;
The world was made for the gypsies' feet,
The winding road for pleasure.

DORA SIGERSON SHORTER.

The Constant Companions

PRUDENCE and resolution ought to be the traveller's constant companions. The first will cause him to avoid a number of snares which he will find in the path as he journeys on; and the second will always lend a hand to assist him if he has unavoidably got entangled in them. CHARLES WATERTON.

Chance Country Snaps

NOW, when we go out a day's pleasuring, which is seldom moreover, we *ride* part of the way—and go into a fine inn, and order the best of dinners, never debating the expense, which, after all, never has half the relish of those chance country snaps, when we were at the mercy of uncertain usage, and a precarious welcome. CHARLES LAMB.

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The Soul of Nicholas Snyders

"All partings take but a little while"

By JEROME K. JEROME

ONCE upon a time in Zandam, which is by the Zuider Zee, there lived a wicked man named Nicholas Snyders. He was mean and hard and cruel, and loved but one thing in the world, and that was gold. And even that not for its own sake. He loved the power gold gave him—the power to tyrannize and to oppress, the power to cause suffering at his will. They said he had no soul, but there they were wrong. All men own—or, to speak more correctly, are owned by—a soul; and the soul of Nicholas Snyders was an evil soul. He lived in the old windmill which still is standing on the quay, with only little Christina to wait upon him and keep house for him. Christina was an orphan whose parents had died in debt. Nicholas, to Christina's everlasting gratitude, had cleared their memory—it cost but a few hundred florins—in consideration that Christina should work for him without wages. Christina formed his entire household, and only one willing visitor ever darkened his door, the widow Toelast. Dame Toelast was rich and almost as great a miser as Nicholas himself. "Why should not we two marry?" Nicholas had once croaked to the widow Toelast. "Together we should be masters of all Zandam." Dame Toelast had answered with a cackling laugh; but Nicholas was never in haste.

One afternoon, Nicholas Snyders sat alone at his desk in the centre of the great semi-circular room that took up half the ground floor of the windmill, and that served him for an office, and there came a knocking at the outer door.

"Come in!" cried Nicholas Snyders.

He spoke in a tone quite kind for Nicholas Snyders. He felt so sure it was Jan knocking at the door—Jan Van der Voort, the young sailor, now master of his own ship, come to demand of him the hand of little Christina. In anticipation, Nicholas Snyders tasted the joy of dashing Jan's hopes to the ground; of hearing him plead, then rave; of watching the growing pallor that would overspread Jan's handsome face as Nicholas would, point by point, explain to him the consequences of defiance—how, firstly, Jan's old mother should be turned out of her home, his old father put into prison for debt; how, secondly, Jan himself should be pursued without remorse, his ship be bought over his head before he could complete the purchase. The interview would afford to Nicholas Snyders sport after his own soul. Since Jan's return the day before, he had been looking forward to it. Therefore, feeling sure it was Jan, he cried, "Come in!" quite cheerily.

But it was not Jan. It was somebody Nicholas Snyders had never set eyes on before. And neither, after that one visit, did Nicholas Snyders ever set eyes upon him again. The light was fading, and Nicholas Snyders was not the man to light candles before they were needed, so that he was never able to describe with any precision the stranger's appearance. Nicholas thought he seemed an old man, but alert in all his movements; while his eyes—the one thing about him Nicholas saw with any clearness—were curiously bright and piercing.

"Who are you?" asked Nicholas Snyders, taking no pains to disguise his disappointment.

"I am a pedlar," answered the stranger. His voice was clear and not unmusical, with just the suspicion of roguishness behind.

"Not wanting anything," answered Nicholas Snyders dryly. "Shut the door and be careful of the step."

But instead the stranger took a chair, and drew it nearer, and, himself in shadow, looked straight into Nicholas Snyders' face and laughed.

"Are you quite sure, Nicholas Snyders? Are you quite sure there is nothing you require?"

"Nothing," growled Nicholas Snyders—"except the sight of your back."

The stranger bent forward, and with his long, lean hand touched Nicholas Snyders playfully upon the knee. "Wouldn't you like a soul, Nicholas Snyders?" he asked.

"Think of it," continued the strange pedlar, before Nicholas could recover power of speech. "For forty years you have drunk the joy of being mean and cruel. Are you not tired of the taste, Nicholas Snyders? Wouldn't you like a change? Think of it, Nicholas Snyders—the joy of being loved, of hearing yourself blessed, instead of cursed? Wouldn't it be good fun, Nicholas Snyders—just by way of a change? If you don't like it, you can return and be yourself again."

What Nicholas Snyders, recalling all things afterwards, could never understand was, why he sat there, listening in patience to the stranger's talk; for, at the time, it seemed to him the jesting of a wandering fool. But something about the stranger had impelled him.

"I have it with me," continued the odd pedlar; "and as for price——" The stranger made a gesture indicating dismissal of all sordid details. "I look for my reward in watching the result of the experiment. I am something of a philosopher. I take an interest in these matters. See." The stranger dived between his legs and produced from his pack a silver flask of cunning workmanship and laid it on the table.

"Its flavour is not unpleasant," explained the stranger. "A little bitter; but one does not drink it by the goblet; a wineglassful, such as one would of old Tokay, while the mind of both is fixed on the same thought: 'May my soul pass into him, may his pass into me!' The operation is quite simple: the secret lies within the drug." The stranger patted the quaint flask as though it had been some little dog.

"You will say: 'Who will exchange souls with Nicholas Snyders?'" The stranger appeared to have come prepared with an answer to all questions. "My friend, you are rich; you need not fear. It is the possession men value the least of all they have. Choose your soul and drive your bargain. I leave that to you with one word of counsel only: you will find the young readier than the old—the young, to whom the world promises all things for gold. Choose you a fine, fair, fresh, young soul, Nicholas Snyders; and choose it quickly. Your hair is somewhat grey, my friend. Taste before you die, the joy of living."

The strange pedlar laughed and, rising, closed his pack. Nicholas Snyders neither moved nor spoke, until with the soft clanging of the massive door his senses returned to him. Then, seizing the flask the stranger had left behind him, he sprang from his chair, meaning to fling it after him into the street. But the flashing of the fire-light on its burnished surface stayed his hand.

"After all, the case is of value," Nicholas chuckled, and put the flask aside and, lighting two tall candles, buried himself again in his green-bound ledger. Yet still from time to time Nicholas Snyders' eyes would wander to where the silver flask remained half hidden among dusty papers. And later there came again a knocking at the door, and this time it really was young Jan who entered.

Jan held out his great hand across the littered desk.

"We parted in anger, Nicholas Snyders. It was my fault. You were in the right. I ask you to forgive me. I was poor. It was selfish of me to wish the little maid to share with me my poverty. But now I am no longer poor."

"Sit down," responded Nicholas in kindly tone. "I have heard of it. So now you are master and the owner of your ship—your very own."

"My very own after one more voyage," laughed Jan. "I have Burgomaster Allart's promise."

"A promise is not a performance," hinted Nicholas. "Burgomaster Allart is not a rich man; a higher bid might tempt him. Another might step in between you and become the owner."

Jan only laughed. "Why, that would be the work of an enemy, which, God be praised, I do not think that I possess."

"Lucky lad!" commented Nicholas; "so few of us are without enemies. And your parents, Jan, will they live with you?"

"We wished it," answered Jan, "both Christina and I. But the mother is feeble. The old mill has grown into her life."

"I can understand," agreed Nicholas. "The old vine torn from the old wall withers. And your father, Jan; people will gossip. The mill is paying?"

Jan shook his head. "It never will again; and the debts haunt him. But all that, as I tell him, is a thing of the past. His

creditors have agreed to look to me and wait."

"All of them?" queried Nicholas.

"All of them I could discover," laughed Jan.

Nicholas Snyders pushed back his chair and looked at Jan with a smile upon his wrinkled face. "And so you and Christina have arranged it all?"

"With your consent, sir," answered Jan.

"You will wait for that?" asked Nicholas.

"We should like to have it, sir."

Jan smiled, but the tone of his voice fell agreeably on Nicholas Snyders' ear. Nicholas Snyders loved best beating the dog that growled and showed its teeth.

"Better not wait for that," said Nicholas Snyders. "You might have to wait long."

Jan rose, an angry flush upon his face. "So nothing changes you, Nicholas Snyders. Have it your own way, then."

"You will marry her in spite of me?"

"In spite of you and of your friends the fiends, and of your master the Devil!" flung out Jan. For Jan had a soul that was generous and brave and tender and excessively short-tempered. Even the best of souls have their failings.

"I am sorry," said old Nicholas.

"I am glad to hear it," answered Jan.

"I am sorry for your mother," explained Nicholas. "The poor dame, I fear, will be homeless in her old age. The mortgage shall be foreclosed, Jan, on your wedding-day. I am sorry for your father, Jan. His creditors, Jan—you have overlooked just one. I am sorry for him, Jan. Prison has always been his dread. I am sorry even for you, my young friend. You will have to begin life over again. Burgomaster Allart is in the hollow of my hand. I have but to say the word, your ship is mine. I wish you joy of your bride, my young friend. You must love her very dearly—you will be paying a high price for her."

It was Nicholas Snyders' grin that maddened Jan. He sought for something that, thrown straight at the wicked mouth, should silence it, and by chance his hand lighted on the pedlar's silver flask. In the same instant Nicholas Snyders' hand had closed upon it also. The grin had died away.

"Sit down," commanded Nicholas Snyders. "Let us talk further." And there was that in his voice that compelled the younger man's obedience.

"You wonder, Jan, why I seek always anger and hatred. I wonder at times myself. Why do generous thoughts never come to me, as to other men? Listen, Jan; I am in a whimsical mood. Such things cannot be, but it is a whim of mine to think it might have been. Sell me your soul, Jan, sell me your soul, that I, too, may taste this love and gladness that I hear about. For a little while, Jan, only for a little while, and I will give you all you desire."

The old man seized his pen and wrote. "See, Jan, the ship is yours beyond mishap; the mill goes free; your father may hold up his head again. And all I ask, Jan, is that you drink to me, willing the while that your soul may go from you and become the soul of old Nicholas Snyders—for a little while, Jan, only for a little while."

With feverish hands the old man had drawn the stopper from the pedlar's flagon, had poured the wine into twin glasses. Jan's inclination was to laugh, but the old man's eagerness was almost frenzy. Surely he was mad; but that would not make less binding the paper he had signed. A true man does not jest with his soul, but the face of Christina was shining down on Jan from out the gloom.

"You will mean it?" whispered Nicholas Snyders.

"May my soul pass from me and enter into Nicholas Snyders!" answered Jan, replacing his empty glass upon the table. And the two stood looking for a moment into one another's eyes.

And the high candles on the littered desk flickered and went out, as though a breath had blown them, first one and then the other.

"I must be getting home," came the voice of Jan from the darkness. "Why did you blow out the candles?"

"We can light them again from the fire," answered Nicholas. He did not add that he had meant to ask that same question of Jan. He thrust them among the glowing logs, first one and then the other; and the shadows crept back into their corners.

"You will not stop and see Christina?" asked Nicholas.

"Not to-night," answered Jan.

"The paper that I signed," Nicholas reminded him—"you have it?"

"I had forgotten it," Jan answered.

The old man took it from the desk and handed it to him. Jan thrust it into his pocket and went out. Nicholas bolted the door behind him and returned to his desk;

sat long there, his elbow resting on the open ledger.

Nicholas pushed the ledger aside and laughed. "What foolery! As if such things could be! The fellow must have bewitched me."

Nicholas crossed to the fire and warmed his hands before the blaze. "Still, I am glad he is going to marry the little lass. A good lad, a good lad."

Nicholas must have fallen asleep before the fire. When he opened his eyes, it was to meet the grey dawn. He felt cold, stiff, hungry, and decidedly cross. Why had not Christina woke him up and given him his supper. Did she think he had intended to pass the night on a wooden chair? The girl was an idiot. He would go upstairs and tell her through the door just what he thought of her.

His way upstairs led through the kitchen. To his astonishment, there sat Christina, asleep before the burnt-out grate.

"Upon my word," muttered Nicholas to himself, "people in this house don't seem to know what beds are for!"

But it was not Christina, so Nicholas told himself. Christina had the look of a frightened rabbit: it had always irritated him. This girl, even in her sleep, wore an impertinent expression—a delightfully impertinent expression. Besides, this girl was pretty—marvellously pretty. Indeed, so pretty a girl Nicholas had never seen in all his life before. Why had the girls, when Nicholas was young, been so entirely different! A sudden bitterness seized Nicholas: it was as though he had just learnt that long ago, without knowing it, he had been robbed.

The child must be cold. Nicholas fetched his fur-lined cloak and wrapped it about her.

There was something else he ought to do. The idea came to him while drawing the cloak around her shoulders, very gently, not to disturb her—something he wanted to do, if only he could think what it was. The girl's lips were parted. She appeared to be speaking to him, asking him to do this thing—or telling him not to do it. Nicholas could not be sure which. Half a dozen times he turned away, and half a dozen times stole back to where she sat sleeping with that delightfully impertinent expression on her face, her lips parted. But what she wanted, or what it was he wanted, Nicholas could not think.

Perhaps Christina would know. Perhaps Christina would know who she was and how she got there. Nicholas climbed the stairs, swearing at them for creaking.

Christina's door was open. No one was in the room; the bed had not been slept upon. Nicholas descended the creaking stairs.

The girl was still asleep. Could it be Christina herself? Nicholas examined the delicious features one by one. Never before, so far as he could recollect, had he seen the girl; yet around her neck—Nicholas had not noticed it before—lay Christina's locket, rising and falling as she breathed. Nicholas knew it well; the one thing belonging to her mother Christina had insisted on keeping. The one thing about which she had ever defied him. She would never have parted with that locket. It must be Christina herself. But what had happened to her?

Or to himself. Remembrance rushed in upon him. The odd pedlar! The scene with Jan! But surely all that had been a dream? Yet there upon the littered desk still stood the pedlar's silver flask, together with the twin stained glasses.

Nicholas tried to think, but his brain was in a whirl. A ray of sunshine streaming through the window fell across the dusty room. Nicholas had never seen the sun, that he could recollect. Involuntarily he stretched his hands towards it, felt a pang of grief when it vanished, leaving only the grey light. He drew the rusty bolts, flung open the great door. A strange world lay before him, a new world of lights and shadows, that wooed him with their beauty—a world of low, soft voices that called to him. There came to him again that bitter sense of having been robbed.

"I could have been so happy all these years," murmured old Nicholas to himself. "It is just the little town I could have loved—so quaint, so quiet, so homelike. I might have had friends, old cronies, children of my own maybe——"

A vision of the sleeping Christina flashed before his eyes. She had come to him a child, feeling only gratitude towards him. Had he had eyes with which to see her, all things might have been different.

Was it too late? He is not so old—not so very old. New life is in his veins. She still loves Jan, but that was the Jan of yesterday. In the future, Jan's every word and deed will be prompted by the evil

soul that was once the soul of Nicholas Snyders—that Nicholas Snyders remembers well. Can any woman love that, let the case be as handsome as you will?

Ought he, as an honest man, to keep the soul he had won from Jan by what might be called a trick? Yes, it had been a fair bargain, and Jan had taken his price. Besides, it was not as if Jan had fashioned his own soul; these things are chance. Why should one man be given gold, and another be given parched peas? He has as much right to Jan's soul as Jan ever had. He is wiser, he can do more good with it. It was Jan's soul that loved Christina; let Jan's soul win her if it can. And Jan's soul, listening to the argument, could not think of a word to offer in opposition.

Christina was still asleep when Nicholas re-entered the kitchen. He lighted the fire and cooked the breakfast and then aroused her gently. There was no doubt it was Christina. The moment her eyes rested on old Nicholas, there came back to her the frightened rabbit look that had always irritated him. It irritated him now, but the irritation was against himself.

"You were sleeping so soundly when I came in last night——" Christina commenced.

"And you were afraid to wake me," Nicholas interrupted her. "You thought the old curmudgeon would be cross. Listen, Christina. You paid off yesterday the last debt your father owed. It was to an old sailor—I had not been able to find him before. Not a cent more do you owe, and there remains to you, out of your wages, a hundred florins. It is yours whenever you like to ask me for it."

Christina could not understand, neither then nor during the days that followed; nor did Nicholas enlighten her. For the soul of Jan had entered into a very wise old man, who knew that the best way to live down the past is to live boldly the present. All that Christina could be sure of was that the old Nicholas Snyders had mysteriously vanished, that in his place remained a new Nicholas, who looked at her with kindly eyes—frank and honest, compelling confidence. Though Nicholas never said so, it came to Christina that she herself, her sweet example, her ennobling influence it was that had wrought this wondrous change. And to Christina the explanation seemed not impossible—seemed even pleasing.

The sight of his littered desk was hateful to him. Starting early in the morning, Nicholas would disappear for the entire day, returning in the evening tired but cheerful, bringing with him flowers that Christina laughed at, telling him they were weeds. But what mattered names? To Nicholas they were beautiful. In Zandam the children ran from him, the dogs barked after him. So Nicholas, escaping through byways, would wander far into the country. Children in the villages around came to know a kind old fellow who loved to linger, his hands resting on his staff, watching their play, listening to their laughter; whose ample pockets were storehouses of good things. Their elders, passing by, would whisper to one another how like he was in features to wicked old Nick, the miser of Zandam, and would wonder where he came from. Nor was it only the faces of the children that taught his lips to smile. It troubled him at first to find the world so full of marvellously pretty girls—of pretty women also, all more or less lovable. It bewildered him. Until he found that, notwithstanding, Christina remained always in his thoughts the prettiest, the most lovable of them all. Then every pretty face rejoiced him: it reminded him of Christina.

On his return the second day, Christina had met him with sadness in her eyes. Farmer Beerstraater, an old friend of her father's, had called to see Nicholas; not finding Nicholas, had talked a little with Christina. A hard-hearted creditor was turning him out of his farm. Christina pretended not to know that the creditor was Nicholas himself, but marvelled that such wicked men could be. Nicholas said nothing, but the next day Farmer Beerstraater had called again, all smiles, blessings, and great wonder.

"But what can have come to him?" repeated Farmer Beerstraater over and over.

Christina had smiled and answered that perhaps the good God had touched his heart; but thought to herself that perhaps it had been the good influence of another. The tale flew. Christina found herself besieged on every hand, and finding her intercessions invariably successful, grew day by day more pleased with herself, and by consequence more pleased with Nicholas Snyders. For Nicholas was a cunning old gentleman. Jan's soul in him took delight in undoing the evil the soul of Nicholas had wrought. But the brain of Nicholas Snyders that remained

to him whispered: "Let the little maid think it is all her doing."

The news reached the ears of Dame Toelast. The same evening saw her seated in the inglenook opposite Nicholas Snyders, who smoked and seemed bored.

"You are making a fool of yourself, Nicholas Snyders," the Dame told him. "Everybody is laughing at you."

"I had rather they laughed than cursed me," growled Nicholas.

"Have you forgotten all that has passed between us?" demanded the Dame.

"Wish I could," sighed Nicholas.

"At your age——" commenced the Dame.

"I am feeling younger than I felt in all my life," Nicholas interrupted her.

"You don't look it," commented the Dame.

"What do looks matter?" snapped Nicholas. "It is the soul of a man that is the real man."

"They count for something, as the world goes," explained the Dame. "Why, if I liked to follow your example and make a fool of myself, there are young men, fine young men, handsome young men——"

"Don't let me stand in your way," interposed Nicholas quickly. "As you say, I am old and I have a devil of a temper. There must be many better men than I am, men more worthy of you."

"I don't say there are not," returned the Dame: "but nobody more suitable. Girls for boys, and old women for old men, as I have told you. I haven't lost my wits, Nicholas Snyders, if you have. When you are yourself again——"

Nicholas Snyders sprang to his feet. "I am myself," he cried, "and intend to remain myself! Who dares say I am not myself?"

"I do," retorted the Dame with exasperating coolness. "Nicholas Snyders is not himself when at the bidding of a pretty-faced doll he flings his money out of the window with both hands. He is a creature bewitched, and I am sorry for him. She'll fool you for the sake of her friends till you haven't a cent left, and then she'll laugh at you. When you are yourself, Nicholas Snyders, you will be crazy with yourself—remember that." And Dame Toelast marched out and slammed the door behind her.

"Girls for boys, and old women for old men." The phrase kept ringing in his ears. Hitherto his new-found happiness had filled his life, leaving no room for thought. But the old Dame's words had sown the seed of reflection.

Was Christina fooling him? The thought was impossible. Never once had she pleaded for herself, never once for Jan. The evil thought was the creature of Dame Toelast's evil mind. Christina loved him. Her face brightened at his coming. The fear of him had gone out of her; a pretty tyranny had replaced it. But was it the love that he sought? Jan's soul in old Nick's body was young and ardent. It desired Christina not as a daughter, but as a wife. Could it win her in spite of old Nick's body? The soul of Jan was an impatient soul. Better to know than to doubt.

"Do not light the candles; let us talk a little by the light of the fire only," said Nicholas. And Christina, smiling, drew her chair towards the blaze. But Nicholas sat in the shadow.

"You grow more beautiful every day, Christina," said Nicholas—"sweeter and more womanly. He will be a happy man who calls you wife."

The smile passed from Christina's face. "I shall never marry," she answered.

"Never is a long word, little one."

"A true woman does not marry the man she does not love."

"But may she not marry the man she does?" smiled Nicholas.

"Sometimes she may not," Christina explained.

"And when is that?"

Christina's face was turned away. "When he has ceased to love her."

The soul in old Nick's body leapt with joy. "He is not worthy of you, Christina. His new fortune has changed him. Is it not so? He thinks only of money. It is as though the soul of a miser had entered into him. He would marry even Dame Toelast for the sake of her gold-bags and her broad lands and her many mills, if only she would have him. Cannot you forget him?"

"I shall never forget him. I shall never love another man. I try to hide it; and often I am content to find there is so much in the world that I can do. But my heart is breaking." She rose and, kneeling beside him, clasped her hands around him. "I am glad you have let me tell you," she said.

" But for you I could not have borne it. You are so good to me."

For answer he stroked with his withered hand the golden hair that fell disordered about his withered knees. She raised her eyes to his ; they were filled with tears, but smiling.

" I cannot understand," she said. " I think sometimes that you and he must have changed souls. He is hard and mean and cruel, as you used to be." She laughed, and the arms around him tightened for a moment. " And now you are kind and tender and great, as once he was. It is as if the good God had taken away my lover from me to give to me a father."

" Listen to me, Christina," he said. " It is the soul that is the man, not the body. Could you not love me for my new soul ? "

" But I do love you," answered Christina, smiling through her tears.

" Could you as a husband ? "

The firelight fell upon her face. Nicholas, holding it between his withered hands, looked into it long and hard ; and reading what he read there, laid it back against his breast and soothed it with his withered hand.

" I was jesting, little one," he said. " Girls for boys, and old women for old men. And so, in spite of all you still love Jan ? "

" I love him," answered Christina. " I cannot help it."

" And if he would, you would marry him, let his soul be what it may ? "

" I love him," answered Christina. " I cannot help it."

Old Nicholas sat alone before the dying fire. Is it the soul or the body that is the real man ? The answer was not so simple as he had thought it.

" Christina loved Jan "—so Nicholas mumbled to the dying fire—" when he had the soul of Jan. She loves him still, though he has the soul of Nicholas Snyders. When I asked her if she could love me, it was terror I read in her eyes, though Jan's soul is now in me ; she divined it. It must be the body that is the real Jan, the real Nicholas. If the soul of Christina entered into the body of Dame Toelast, should I turn from Christina, from her golden hair, her fathomless eyes, her asking lips, to desire the shrivelled carcase of Dame Toelast ? No ; I should still shudder at the thought of her. Yet when I had the soul of Nicholas Snyders, I did not loathe her, while Christina was naught to me. It must be with the soul that we love, else Jan would still love Christina and I should be Miser Nick. Yet here am I loving Christina, using Nicholas Snyders' brain and gold to thwart Nicholas Snyders' every scheme, doing everything that I know will make him mad when he comes back into his own body ; while Jan cares no longer for Christina, would marry Dame Toelast for her broad lands, her many mills. Clearly it is the soul that is the real man. Then ought I not to be glad, thinking I am going back into my own body, knowing that I shall wed Christina ? But I am not glad ; I am very miserable. I shall not go with Jan's soul, I feel it ; my own soul will come back to me. I shall be again the hard, cruel, mean old man I was before, only now I shall be poor and helpless. The folks will laugh at me, and I shall curse them, powerless to do them evil. Even Dame Toelast will not want me when she learns all. And yet I must do this thing. So long as Jan's soul is in me, I love Christina better than myself. I must do this for her sake. I love her—I cannot help it."

Old Nicholas rose, took from the place where a month before he had hidden it, the silver flask of cunning workmanship.

" Just two more glassfuls left," mused Nicholas, as he gently shook the flask against his ear. He laid it on the desk before him, then opened once again the old green ledger, for there still remained work to be done.

He woke Christina early. " Take these letters, Christina," he commanded. " When you have delivered them all, but not before, go to Jan ; tell him I am waiting here to see him on a matter of business." He kissed her and seemed loth to let her go.

" I shall only be a little while," smiled Christina.

" All partings take but a little while," he answered.

Old Nicholas had foreseen the trouble he would have. Jan was content, had no desire to be again a sentimental young fool, eager to saddle himself with a penniless wife. Jan had other dreams.

" Drink, man, drink ! " cried Nicholas impatiently, " before I am tempted to change my mind. Christina, provided you marry her, is the richest bride in Zandam. There is the deed ; read it ; and read quickly."

Then Jan consented, and the two men drank. And there passed a breath between

them as before; and Jan with his hands covered his eyes a moment.

It was a pity, perhaps, that he did so, for in that moment Nicholas snatched at the deed that lay beside Jan on the desk. The next instant it was blazing in the fire.

"Not so poor as you thought!" came the croaking voice of Nicholas. "Not so poor as you thought! I can build again, I can build again!" And the creature, laughing hideously, danced with its withered arms spread out before the blaze, lest Jan should seek to rescue Christina's burning dowry before it was destroyed.

Jan did not tell Christina. In spite of all Jan could say, she would go back. Nicholas Snyders drove her from the door with curses. She could not understand. The only thing clear was that Jan had come back to her.

"'Twas a strange madness that seized upon me," Jan explained. "Let the good sea breezes bring us health."

So from the deck of Jan's ship they watched old Zandam till it vanished into air.

Christina cried a little at the thought of never seeing it again; but Jan comforted her and later new faces hid the old.

And old Nicholas married Dame Toelast, but, happily, lived to do evil only for a few years longer.

Long after, Jan told Christina the whole story, but it sounded very improbable, and Christina—though, of course, she did not say so—did not quite believe it, but thought Jan was trying to explain away that strange month of his life during which he had wooed Dame Toelast. Yet it certainly was strange that Nicholas, for the same short month, had been so different from his usual self.

"Perhaps," thought Christina, "if I had not told him I loved Jan, he would not have gone back to his old ways. Poor old gentleman! No doubt it was despair."

The Sussex Downs

THOUGH I have now travelled the Sussex-downs upwards of thirty years, yet I still investigate that chain of majestic mountains with fresh admiration year by year; and think I see new beauties every time I traverse it. This range, which runs from Chichester eastward as far as East-Bourn, is about sixty miles in length, and is called The South Downs, properly speaking, only round Lewes. As you pass along you command a noble view of the wild, or weald, on one hand, and the broad downs and sea on the other. Mr. Ray used to visit a family just at the foot of these hills, and was so ravished with the prospect from Plumpton-plain near Lewes, that he mentions those scapes in his "Wisdom of God in the Works of the Creation" with the utmost satisfaction, and thinks them equal to anything he had seen in the finest parts of Europe.

For my own part, I think there is somewhat peculiarly sweet and amusing in the shapely figured aspect of chalk-hills in preference to those of stone, which are rugged, broken, abrupt, and shapeless.

Perhaps I may be singular in my opinion, and not so happy as to convey to you the same idea, but I never contemplate these mountains without thinking I perceive somewhat analogous to growth in their gentle swellings and smooth fungus-like protuberances, their fluted sides, and regular hollows and slopes, that carry at once the air of vegetative dilation and expansion.

GILBERT WHITE.

A GREAT LITERARY DISCOVERY

The Lady of the Ladle

By LEWIS CARROLL

THANKS to the long and patient research of a well-known writer, I am able to present to my readers what, in effect, is an unknown nonsense poem by the world-famous author of "Alice in Wonderland," and other delightful books.

Its previous and only other publication was made on August 31, 1854, in "The Whitby Gazette," and it is by the courtesy of the Editor of that paper that our contributor has been able to secure a copy.

From July to September in the forementioned year, C. L. Dodgson, who had not then invented his pen-name of Lewis Carroll, stayed at Whitby. The *Hilda* and *Goliath* were local pleasure boats of the period, and "the wondrous stair" refers to a quaint ascent known as "Jacob's Ladder."

The poem is of considerable interest as the author was only 22 years of age when he wrote it. That it augured the great and lasting fame subsequently achieved by this writer of delightful nonsense is obvious, for it reveals the promise which was afterwards fulfilled.—ED.

THE LADY OF THE LADLE

THE Youth at Eve had drunk his fill,
Where stands the "Royal" on the hill,
And long his midday stroll had made,
On the so-called "Marine Parade"—
(Meant, I presume, for Seamen brave,
Whose "march is on the Mountain wave";
'Twere just the bathing-place for him
Who stays on land till he can swim)—
And he had strayed into the town,
And paced each alley up and down,
Where still, so narrow grew the way,
The very houses seemed to say,
Nodding to friends across the street,
"One struggle more and we shall meet."
And he had scaled that wondrous stair
That soars from earth to upper air,
Where rich and poor alike must climb,
And walk the treadmill for a time.
That morning he had dressed with care,
And put Pomatum in his hair;
He was, the loungers all agreed,
A very heavy swell indeed:
Men thought him as he swaggered by,
Some scion of nobility,
And never dreamed, so cold his look,
That he had loved—and loved a Cook.

Upon the beach he stood and sighed,
Unheedful of the treacherous tide;
Thus sang he to the listening main,
And soothed his sorrow with the strain:—

Coronach

"SHE is gone by the *Hilda*;
She is lost unto Whitby,
And her name is Matilda,
Which my heart it was smit by;
Tho' I take the *Goliath*,
I learn to my sorrow
That 'it won't' says the crier,
'Be off till to-morrow.'

"She called me her 'Neddy'
(Tho' there mayn't be much in it),
And I should have been ready,
If she'd waited a minute;
I was following behind her,
When, if you recollect, I
Merely ran back to find a
Gold pin for my neck-tie.

"Rich dresser of suet!
Prime hand at a sausage!
I have lost thee, I rue it,
And my fare for the passage!
Perhaps she thinks it funny,
Aboard of the *Hilda*,
But I've lost purse and money,
And thee, oh, my 'Tilda!"

His pin of gold the youth undid,
And in his waistcoat-pocket hid;
Then gently folded hand in hand,
And dropped asleep upon the sand.

Little Fräulein and the Big World

More than a story—a peace treaty

By I. A. R. WYLIE

THE street was all grey. It was difficult to believe that there were so many tones of grey in the world. The low sky and the slanting rain, the tall, dejected houses, the shining pavements, the shop-windows, and the solitary policeman were all different and yet one-coloured, so that they merged into one another and made a kind of melancholy harmony.

Even the serpent was grey.

Or rather, it was a dragon, because it had legs—any number of them—and Fräulein Gertrude auf und zu und von Arnstein-Prutwitz (this was her full name, as found in Gotha's *Almanach*, but fortunately most people called her Trüdchen), who had been brought up on the best fairy-stories, knew that all dragons had legs of some sort. But undoubtedly from a distance it looked more like a serpent, long and sinuous, and without any of that bluff and comic violence which makes dragons almost lovable.

At any rate it was a punctual creature. Every morning at nine o'clock when Trüdchen turned into the Kaiserstrasse—a street-name that ought to have been painted out long since, but everyone was too tired and worried to bother about a detail like that—there it was, and at five minutes past nine it swallowed Fräulein auf und zu and all-the-rest-of-it, whole.

She was, as it were, almost its first morsel. But to-day things had gone wrong. They had been going wrong for a long time—ever since she could remember. It was like a tremendous toboggan-run. You started off slowly, everybody shouting and excited. Then you began to go fast—too fast—and then you lost control, and then suddenly everything seemed to go to pieces and fly off in a hundred different directions, and you knew it was the end.

This wasn't Trüdchen's description. It was her dream. The night before it had kept on coming back. Her blanket, which was a temperamental thing full of moods and holes, was thinner than usual, and the cold had gnawed a hollow place in her middle just like that left by a sudden swoop down in a lift. So that probably the dream was natural enough. But it was a very tiring dream, and when the grey winter's morning had crept through the grey curtains Trüdchen hadn't wanted to get up, and when she did get up she had found a large hole in one of her long black woollen stockings, and had begun to cry. Not loudly—hardly to notice, as you might say. The Arnstein-Prutwitzes were a very old family composed exclusively of heroes, and Trüdchen's father had worn an Iron Cross when they brought him home for the last time, and Trüdchen had learnt not to cry quite early in life. But this time her mother had found her sitting on the edge of her tumbled bed, the tears trickling noiselessly down a small white face, and the woollen stocking half off, half on, with the hole showing horribly.

Her mother had sat down beside her and held her tight. She had a letter in one hand—crunched up as though by a bitter indignation—and she, too, was trembling from head to foot.

"They don't want us, Trüdi. Nobody wants us. It's all my fault, darling. I've no tact, you see. God knows what will become of us——"

And then she had caught sight of the hole and had quietly fainted.

To anyone else, perhaps, it might have seemed rather absurd—fainting because of a hole in a woollen stocking. But to Trüdchen it was the only reasonable thing to do. She made no fuss about it. She just crouched down by her mother's side, stroking the pretty faded face with its frozen look of despair, and saying "Lieb Mütterchen" over and over again as though it had been the refrain of a sad little lullaby. And indeed she did not want her mother to wake up. For when she did wake up she would have to think about the hole, and the hole was quite hopeless—beyond repair. It was much nicer to go on sleeping.

But it so happened that Frau Hildebrandt, who ran the little haberdashery shop behind which they had their one room, came in and said, "Ach, du liebe Gott!" and picked up Frau von Arnstein in her strong arms and laid her on the bed and dashed water into her face.

"You make a cup of strong coffee, Fräulein," she commanded in her large unter-offizier's voice. "Quick!"

But Trüdchen couldn't. She could only stare hard into the empty cupboard. There wasn't any coffee. There wasn't anything (which was odd, when you realized that the Arnstein-Prutwitzes were such important people and that Frau von Arnstein-Prutwitz, as an officer's widow, had a pension of so many millions that Trüdchen, who was good at arithmetic, couldn't count them). And then suddenly she felt frightened, as she often did. She felt she couldn't bear to see her mother's white face or tell Frau Hildebrandt about the coffee. She took her mother's purse where it lay on the table and her basket, and set out, walking very sedately, because of being so terribly afraid. But of course it was long past nine when she turned the corner of the Kaiserstrasse and the dragon's head had disappeared into the baker's shop, and instead of being swallowed up she became the last minute vertebra in the creature's tail.

It took no particular notice of her. The policeman who was there to keep an eye on its behaviour and see that it didn't get out of hand and take up too much of the pavement considered her dully. Two stout women immediately in front turned to look at her, and the raindrops from their umbrellas, which she had been anxiously avoiding, trickled down her neck.

"Ach, the little Prutwitz!" they said. But they didn't smile. Nobody ever smiled at her, except by accident. You couldn't say that they looked angry, either, but there was something at the back of their eyes which made you understand that if you touched them they would shrink away in spite of themselves. It was very puzzling, and though it had always been like that, Trüdchen never really got accustomed to it. She knew, of course, that she was a plain, disagreeable child. But then people looked at her mother, who was good and beautiful beyond question, in just the same way. And whereas Trüdchen was terribly ashamed and only wished people wouldn't look at her at all, her mother carried herself like a queen who had to live among inferior people. So that in all the little town they had only one friend—large Frau Hildebrandt who quarrelled with everyone.

The dragon moved terribly slowly. First it stood on one big leg and then on another. It was very cold and the rain sogged through the paper soles of its innumerable shoes. First Trüdchen's feet hurt, and then they didn't hurt at all. The dragon gave a wriggle and its last minute vertebra was shaken loose. Trüdchen was left behind, her eyes wide with distress and astonishment. The policeman waved a gloved paw at her.

"Now then—move on there!"

It seemed to her that the dragon turned completely round to gaze at her, and her button-nose grew redder with shame.

"Oh, please—I can't——"

"What's that? Can't——?"

"Ach, bitte, Herr Polizei, I've lost my feet——"

For a minute it seemed as though everyone were going to be nice. The policeman bent down, his hands on his thick thighs, and stared about solemnly as though he were really looking for something, and one of the stout women put down her basket and rubbed the spindly little legs in the darned black stockings until they became veritable pin-cushions, so full of pins that Trüdchen couldn't stand still but performed a jerky dance like an alarmed marionette. But it was so wonderful to have people kind to her that she didn't mind.

Then suddenly it was over. They said, "Na, so ist recht!" and stood back from her and stared in just the same old way. It was as though they had remembered they had forgotten and were thinking "Serve you right!—serve you right!"

They were queer themselves. Even the policeman, who seemed so large and solid, made you feel that if anyone touched him too roughly he might disappear altogether. And he knew. You could see the fear of it in his round blue eyes and the bristling fair moustache was somehow very sad. The people were so big and yet they weren't quite real. They were like shadows. The street was a shadow. Trüdchen could remember—or rather it was less a memory than a picture in a whole jumble of pictures—a place full of bustling, confident people, tall men in gay uniforms, and grand-dukes and princes in carriages, and bands playing music that made your heart swell, and flags

flying in the sunlight, and red-cheeked boys and girls, and shops that still bulged with toys and cakes and real cream.

Something had happened. It was as though winter had come for ever.

The clock of the Lutheran Church at the end of the street boomed twelve. By this time there was nothing left of the dragon but Trüdchen and the woman who had rubbed her legs and said "Tsh! Tsh!" at the hole in the black stocking. They stood together in the baker's shop, which had a flustered, devastated look as though it had been swept bare by a whirlwind, and the baker's wife whispered mysteriously:

"See what I have kept for you, Frau Gephardt!" She produced a stick of bread and three shiny brown Bretzeln from under the counter. "I thought to myself, 'Na, this time the Gephardt little ones shall have a treat. It's not much they get, poor things!"

"God knows that's true, Frau Bäckerin!"

Trüdchen stood on tip toe. She was nearly ten, but for some reason or other she hadn't grown much, and it was hard work getting the baker's wife even to see her.

"If you please, four little breads——"

And she held out her million mark note pleadingly.

The baker's wife stood with her arms akimbo. She had a round, tight-skinned face that must once have been pink and jolly and wasn't any more. She was fat and pale, and you felt that if anyone put a pin in her she would blow up and sink to nothing, like a balloon. She had a round, hard forehead and cold blue eyes that stared down at Trüdchen with such a lack of expression that it was like hatred.

"There isn't a crumb left," she said, "not a crumb. Tell your Frau Mutter that if the King of England wanted four little breads he couldn't have them. So there!" She laughed, and her laugh terrified Trüdchen, because a minute before the baker's wife had been kind and smiling. So that it was she, Trüdchen, who made people feel wicked. But she couldn't move. She stood there, peering over the edge of the counter with wide-open eyes and mouth, and from the other side she must have looked like a hungry, rather stupid little minnow. Obviously it was of no use to repeat, "Please—four little breads!" and equally obvious she couldn't go home without them. Whatever else had failed in the grey, frightening world, the "little breads" had always stood firm. When meat soared out of sight or butter melted like a dream there were still the four daily "little breads"—two for dinner and one for supper and one (stale) for breakfast. And if you dipped them in your Ersatz Kaffee they went farther and made you feel almost full.

And now they had gone, like everything else.

The baker's wife said nothing. Her lips, thin and anæmic, were pressed tight together. She wouldn't explain. She wouldn't hold out any hope. She wasn't sorry. She was glad. Inside herself she was saying, "Serve you right!—serve you right!" And her eyes were colourless and cold like the eyes of a dead fish.

Trüdchen turned slowly away. Her legs didn't seem to belong to her. They waggled this way and that under her dwarfed and wizened little body. They were much too long and thin—all out of proportion, so that they made Fräulein auf und zu, with her short plaid skirt and tam-o'-shanter, look like one of those comic penwipers that you can make out of matches, a scrap of old duster, and a ball of wool. Only somehow she wasn't funny. Even the children in the gymnasium, where she went when she was strong enough, and who hated her, didn't laugh.

The woman with the basket stood in the doorway and looked back at her. She was frowning as though she were trying to make up her mind. Her mouth trembled. She might be going to smile or cry. Her face was full of kindness. Then suddenly she remembered—as everyone did sooner or later. She snapped the lid of her basket, and tossed up her head and stumped out angrily.

But Trüdchen knew that if she had been any other little girl something wonderful would have happened.

II

ONE day Trüdchen's schoolmistress had told her class the story of Robinson Crusoe, and Trüdchen had said in her prim, grave way, "I wish I could be wrecked on a desert island." Everyone had burst out into mocking laughter. And Trüdchen had set her teeth and sat very upright, swallowing her shame.

But in her heart she knew what she meant. She knew it was the truth. There was nothing terrible in being alone with

bees and flowers and even wild beasts. But it was terrible to be alone in a world crowded with people. They might jostle you and almost knock you over, and yet never really touch you. Wherever you went there was a barrier between you and them, and nobody ever crossed it even to scold, much less take you in their arms and pet you. On the other side they quarrelled, were happy or unhappy, but at any rate they belonged to one another. You were different—it was very difficult to understand in what way, because you seemed to yourself just like everybody else—and so people hated you. When you came into a shop they stopped complaining about the price of things and looked proud and aloof. The children in the gymnasium walked away from you and played in another corner. The teachers changed their voices when they read out that you were top of the class. They couldn't hide how hard it was for them.

Sometimes it was worse than that. Sometimes in a winter's dusk, coming down on a deserted street, Trüdchen could feel how all the bitter, terrible things people hid in their hearts slipped out of their hiding-places and closed in on her. She could almost see them and their lightless, hating eyes, almost feel their hands clutching at her, tweaking at her pigtail with cruel fingers, hear their malicious whisperings. And she walked very slowly, very upright, as though she had swallowed a poker, because she was so frightened. She knew that if she began to run she would never stop.

It was like that to-day. The winter's sky hung so low and was so grey that the street was already in twilight. The fine rain had become a deluge which had swept everybody indoors. The big drops danced on the pavements like demons. It was of no use to hug the wall. They jumped into your shoes. They dragged your clothes about you in a dank, heavy weight so that you could hardly walk. They got into your glasses so that you were half blinded. From the pointed roofs that looked witch-like and wicked against the grey-yellow background, they came racing down together in cascades —shouting and burbling.

A great desolation was in Trüdchen's heart. She hadn't had any breakfast, and there wouldn't be any lunch or supper—unless Frau Hildebrandt took pity on them. She was wet through and cold, and there wouldn't be any fire. She thought of her mother's poor white face when she heard that there was no bread. Perhaps she would faint again. It must be very nice to faint and forget things.

A troop of school-children came swarming round the corner. They wore short mackintosh capes over the square satchels strapped on their backs, so that they looked hunch-backed and uncanny in the gloomy light, like unfriendly elves. Their faces were white and pinched, without laughter, as though the cold, biting rain were just the last endurable exasperation. They plodded on in silence until suddenly a boy in the yellow cap of the Tertium caught sight of Trüdchen and raised a cry.

"Sieh da—die Prutwitz—die Prutwitz!"

She had hoped for the best. If only this time they wouldn't see her! Quite often in the summer when the sun was shining they would leave her alone, but when they were hungry and cold a kind of rage got into them and they became like a pack of hounds. With a sinking heart she saw them turn about—hesitate, and then come drifting back.

"Ah, ha—die Prutwitz!" The terrible snigger that was always the beginning of their worst anger curled up their lips but left their eyes cold and pitilesss. They didn't look at her as though she had been another child like themselves, but as though she had been a strange wild beast, with curiosity and hatred. She made no attempt to escape. She stood with her back to the wall, a quaint, bedraggled figure. Her composure and prim uprightness incensed them. It looked like superiority—as though she despised them—as though they couldn't hurt her whatever they did. She was always like that—"Trüdchen-head-in-the air," they called her—so stiff and proper and aloof. If they had seen into her wildly beating heart with its anguish of fear and loneliness the worst of them would have slunk away. The best might have said, "Never mind. Come on and play with us."

But if you come of a race of heroes you keep your wretched heart to yourself.

They hadn't touched her yet. But the circle grew narrower. They began to sharpen their stubby little forefingers at her.

"Aitch! Aitch! Aitch! Die Engländerin! What has the little pig of an English girl got in her basket?"

"Plenty to eat—plenty to eat——"

"All the English pigs have plenty to eat——"

"—so that good Germans starve——"

"Aitch! Aitch!"

Somebody twitched the basket out of her hand. But its emptiness did not appease them. The first act of violence had set them free. They pinched her—pulled her hair—twisted her arms with little mean quick movements. And she made no resistance, but stood there patiently, keeping her eyes fixed hard on a point just above their heads. The pain was hard to bear. It was sharp and spiteful—the kind that makes you go wild with rage and hit out blindly. But what hurt was being alone and the terrible bigness of the world.

She wanted her mother. She wanted to run to her mother and hide against her. Her mother, who was so pale and helpless, became an overshadowing sweet figure of refuge. Only she mustn't run—and she mustn't cry. She pressed her mouth tight and her eyes stared out round and blank through the rain-splashed glasses.

"Who killed my brother?"

"—and my father——"

"—my three brothers——"

"—who killed her father?"

"Aitch! aitch!"

"P'raps her mother did. They say——"

Suddenly the thing she had been most afraid of happened. She couldn't bear anything any more. She was like a little mad thing, with a wild white face and flying arms and legs, hitting out frenziedly, tearing, biting—not caring. At first it was all an inextricable confusion. Everybody tumbled over everyone and screamed and tried to get out of the way—for now they were frightened of her. The next minute almost she was through. They didn't even try to pursue her. Perhaps in a sort of way they had got what they wanted. For now she was running and crying—at least, there were no tears, but the sobs tore their way out from the very bottom of her through her open, gasping mouth. And she ran and ran, quite blindly, up one street and down another, with the rain lashing her and the wind blowing her along like a wisp of straw.

But however desperate you are, you can't run to the end of the world. There isn't any end. It's round. And so sooner or later you have to come back to your own door.

Trüdchen stood outside. People passing would hardly have seen her, she was pressed so closely against the dripping wall. She could just see through the glass top of Frau Hildebrandt's shop-window, and the jumble of goods on the counter had an eerie look in the twilight. But then Trüdchen couldn't see very well. Her glasses were broken. That meant that she could never go in. Because her mother had said, "You mustn't break your glasses, Trüdi darling—not whatever you do. You see, I *couldn't* buy another pair."

And now they were broken. And there was a long, terrible tear in the sleeve of her reefer coat.

Poor little mother!

Trüdchen wished — she wished — she didn't dare to think what she wished.

A light sprang up. It leapt through the door between the shop and their one room and was gone again. The door had opened and closed. Trüdchen could see Frau Hildebrandt's bulky form looming down upon her. It was like fate. Nothing could stop her. Nothing. Ominous and heavy she came—and yet not unkind either. Just inevitable. Trüdchen said aloud, "Oh, please—please, don't!" though she knew it was of no good.

The shop-door opened with a tinkle of the bell. Frau Hildebrandt looked up the street and down the street. And then she saw Trüdchen, crouched against the wall, and stood back with a nod. Trüdchen crept in. But Frau Hildebrandt laid a heavy hand on her shoulder.

"Armes kindchen!" she said.

She was crying.

And so Trüdchen knew that her wish had been given her and that her little mother was dead.

III

IT seemed that when people are dead you forgive them everything. But it was rather difficult to understand why. What have the dead done? Perhaps the dead don't care, any way. But the living would have been so glad.

Trüdchen, in her new black dress and her black hat with crêpe and her new black shoes and stockings, couldn't help thinking how pleased and astonished her mother would have been at her own wonderful funeral. The Kriegsverein sent a deputation to walk behind the coffin with a wreath, and three officers from Hauptmann von Arnstein-Prutwitz's old regiment (in brand new

uniforms with shining epaulettes) came with another wreath and an inscription:

"To the Widow of our heroic Comrade."

The Frau Bäckerin sent a tiny bunch of flowers.

Trüdchen couldn't be really unhappy, because she felt that for the first time her poor lonely little mother was among friends, at peace.

On the day of the funeral there came a letter from England. Trüdchen, who had learnt English from her mother, could just read it. It was very stiff and clear. It said that of course since her German relations would have nothing to do with her, it was necessary that Trüdchen should come to England. There was money enclosed. And would whoever was looking after Trüdchen let her grandfather, Sir Ambrose Hampden, know when and where to expect her.

Although it was such a simple, matter-of-fact letter anyone could have told that the writer was very bitter and unhappy about something and didn't want Trüdchen in the very least.

The night before Trüdchen left for England she and Frau Hildebrandt had a long talk about it all. Trüdchen sat up very straight and stiff at Frau Hildebrandt's table and looked through her new glasses with dry eyes. Although she was so small and poor-looking physically, she had always been top of her class, and she could think things out and understand. And she wanted to understand.

Frau Hildebrandt had been servant to Hauptmann von Arnstein-Prutwitz and his young English wife when they had first married. So she knew everything. She told Trüdchen how happy everyone had been. One particular Christmas she could remember. There had been a sort of gathering of the clans. The Arnstein-Prutwitzes (auf und zu und von) had come and the Hampdens had come and there had been tremendous jollifications with toasting, drinking, and joking about "Der Tag."

"Der Tag" was to be Trüdchen's first birthday.

But before "Der Tag" came they were all killing one another.

At first the War hadn't seemed to matter so much. They wrote to one another through a neutral country and said it was a War of Governments and that it shouldn't make any difference to individuals. Then the Hampden's only son was killed—murdered, so his father wrote—and then one of the Prutzwitz family was wiped out and a great implacable bitterness spread like an ulcer. And when the young English wife wrote home she defended her new countrymen and accused her own people, and when the old Prutzwitzes came she quarrelled with them so that they never came again. She fought everyone—poor, exiled, uprooted little woman, breaking her heart, until at last she had no one in the world but Trüdchen and her husband. For him too there was no joy left. People said he was glad of that final bullet.

All this Frau Hildebrandt told in her own way, mopping up the last drop of her Ersatz-Kaffee with the last fragment of a Zwieback. And Trüdchen watched her and thought earnestly, trying to make everything clear to herself.

"But am I really English?" she asked.

Frau Hildebrandt opened her eyes wide in horror.

"Gott bewahre! What puts such a dreadful thought in that silly head?"

"But I must be—just a little."

"Na—just a little, perhaps."

"And that's why everyone hates me."

"Ach, kindchen, it's a bad, queer world. We poor Germans—we've suffered. The English couldn't rest until they had ruined us. God knows we are kind and easy-going. But when one is always hungry it is difficult to forgive——"

"Are all the English bad, Frau Hildebrandt?"

Frau Hildebrandt fidgeted. She was a truthful woman. It went against her principles to tell lies—even to children.

"Well, God made them, kindchen. He must have had His reasons. The French are worse, perhaps——"

"But my mother——"

"Ah, there now! She was a sweet soul. If only she could have been a good German! But she couldn't. Blood is blood, my dear. You can't get away from that."

"What does it mean—blood being blood, Frau Hildebrandt?"

"Eh—what? Na, it just means you are what you are. That's what it means."

"What am I?"

Frau Hildebrandt looked across the table. A vague alarm stirred at the bottom of her good-natured soul. She said solemnly and reassuringly:

"You are Fräulein auf und zu und von Arnstein-Prutwitz. You must never forget

that. You must carry your head high, kindchen. You must be your father's daughter—a real German little girl."

But Trüdchen sat very still. She didn't ask any more questions. It was of no use. Frau Hildebrandt wouldn't tell her the truth. She would have to find it out for herself. Even now she was beginning to understand. Because of her poor little mother there was a terrible wicked taint in her blood. So that she couldn't live any more in her own country and her own people could never love her.

IV

PERHAPS going away was a little like dying. People were sorry. The Frau Bäckerin came to the station with Frau Hildebrandt and brought three Bretzel. "Because," she said solemnly, "it is a long journey and you will be hungry." And she was fidgety and rather cross as though she were worried about something.

Frau Hildebrandt tied a label round Trüdchen's neck with her name and English address and felt her pockets to see that the purse and the precious passport were all safe. Without the passport, evidently, one came to a bad end. And the guard took his tip and said, "Jawohl," and looked at Trüdchen earnestly so that he should recognize her. She was so small that she might easily be overlooked. And then Trüdchen sat in her corner by the window and the platform slid away, carrying with it two stout women, one of whom was crying. And Trüdchen would have cried too if she hadn't been Fräulein auf und zu and-all-the-rest-of-it, because Frau Hildebrandt, in spite of everything, was fond of her. And that was wonderful. But instead she sat very stiffly with her hands in their little black cotton gloves folded on her lap, and her mouth compressed, and cried inside. Which, as everybody knows, is so much, much worse.

The carriage was jammed tight with people. They were all strangers and yet they were so like everybody else that Trüdchen felt she knew them—large, grey-coloured people who hardly spoke, but every now and then sighed and stirred in their places like tired cattle.

The train rumbled heavily along. It didn't go very fast. It seemed jaded and reluctant like everything else. The fir-clad hills of the Black Forest dwindled till at last their black crests just peered over the horizon, as though they were saying, "Good-bye—good-bye, Trüdchen," and were having a last sad look at her. Then the dusk came and wiped everything out, and presently there was nothing left to be seen but a rushing darkness and the streaming torches of the station lights as they fled past. For the train was going fast now. It was desperate. It didn't care any more.

The grey people took out bags of paper and began to eat. Under the dim lamp they looked more than ever as though they were half-dead. Trüdchen couldn't eat—not even a Bretzel. There was a hollow place where her heart was—a terrible dragging feeling as though something very important in her inside had been torn out and she were bleeding to death. Once she sobbed aloud and the stout, kindly-looking man opposite her looked up from his Butterbrötchen in astonishment. But her eyes were dry and she put up her hand to her mouth and said "Verzeihung" very solemnly so that he should think it had been a hiccough.

Every now and then the guard came in and took great bites out of her ticket. And each time he nodded to her and said, "Na, wie geht's?" and Trüdchen said, "Quite well, thank you." He was a little fair bustling fellow with snappy blue eyes, and Trüdchen thought how angry he would look if he knew the truth. It was terrible to think how everyone would shrink away from her. She felt like a small black lie sitting there among all these sad, friendly people.

The stout man leant forward. Something in his expression told her that the hiccough had been no good.

"Are you going a long way, little Fräulein?"

"Yes, sir."

"It must be very lonely."

"Yes."

"Haven't you any people?"

She shook her head. If only he wouldn't ask any more questions! Everyone was looking at her so kindly. They saw that she was in mourning. Poor forlorn little girl! The stout man leant across and took the label and read aloud:

"Fräulein auf und zu und von Prutwitz-Arnstein, bei Sir Ambrose Hampden, Stanten Court, Ayrsdale, Cheshire—Holland—

Harwich." He looked up at her smiling, puzzled. "All the way, Mädel?"

"Yes."

"To England?"

They were all listening now. They had even stopped eating, with their Butterbrötchen halfway to their mouths, and in a minute that queer withdrawn look would come into their faces. It was a terrible thing to be very small and belong to a family of heroes who were never afraid.

"Yes."

"Have you people there?"

And then suddenly before she knew what she was doing she had said in a high, squeaky voice:

"My mother was English."

"Ah!—I see."

The stout man nodded and sat back. Everyone went on eating. Trüdchen knew just what they felt. It was like that in class when someone had done or said something wrong. One was ashamed for them in one's very bones.

Of course it was just a chance that a few minutes later, when they slid into a big station, everyone should begin to gather up their possessions. They lumbered out into the dark, one after another. They didn't look at Trüdchen—except the stout man, who turned back and patted her on the shoulder.

"Poor little Fräulein!" he said.

Of course—just a chance. And yet it was as though they were getting up and leaving her because they couldn't bear it. Without them the carriage grew cold and filled with shadows. The whole train seemed to have died and the guard's voice coming down the corridor had a terrifying hollow sound.

"Passports—get your passports ready, please."

He peered in. She was so small—so blotted out in her corner that he had to look twice before he saw her.

"I get off here. It's the frontier. Good luck, Fräulein."

"Danke," she said. "Danke schön."

He couldn't help laughing. She was such a prim, composed little thing.

The door slammed. The train jerked forward, throwing out a long, melancholy whistle into the darkness. In a moment they would have passed over that mysterious line. Fräulein von Arnstein-Prutwitz scrambled down from her seat. She flung herself against the closed door. All the brave ancestors were forgotten. She fought with the stiff handle that wouldn't yield.

"Oh, please—please let me get out—let me go home."

She didn't know what home meant.

A French official opened the door. He stared down at her. She looked queer enough in the dingy half-light, a comic child's figure with a crêpe hat over one ear and a dead-white face and round eyes behind round spectacles.

"Passports, please!"

She gave him hers. He looked at it, comparing the photograph with the original. Ugly little German brat! He gave it back to her with a malicious ceremonious touch to his képi.

"Merci, mademoiselle."

She stood there in the middle of the carriage, very still, very upright, swallowing her gasps.

At least she was glad that she hadn't really cried.

V

MONSIEUR JULES LEFORGES, member of the French Senate, got in at the next station. He had no idea that anything particular was going to happen to him. He arranged his traps, spread his overcoat over his knees and folded his gloved hands over his newspaper with the air of an experienced traveller settling himself down to a comfortable journey. At first sight he looked an easy-going, genial gentleman, rather stout, with a full grey-bearded face and sparkling blue eyes, deepset. But at second sight one wasn't so sure. The broad shoulders were held aggressively, the mouth was tightly closed, and the eyes had a harsh, fierce stare in them even when he smiled. One plump hand was a very neat replica of its companion except that it wasn't flexible. It wasn't real.

Monsieur Leforges glanced round him, as a traveller will, to see who his fellow-travellers are and whether they are likely to annoy him. He saw a little girl in the far corner by the window. He saw her, but he really couldn't be said to have noticed her. She passed in and out of his vision without reaching his consciousness, as it were. She was too small.

As to Trüdchen, she didn't see him at all. She was sitting bolt upright, with her

hands clasped in her lap, staring intently at nothing.

So they chanced on one another.

Monsieur Leforges's secretary, a bright, smooth young man, glanced at her too and glanced away again. He liked children—particularly little girls—but he didn't care for this one. She was quite unattractive, almost half-witted looking. He smiled across at his employer, of whom he stood in some awe.

"Looks as though we might have the carriage to ourselves," he said. "A good ending to a good day, monsieur."

Monsieur Leforges nodded. He settled his big shoulders more comfortably in their corner and made a little growling, satisfied noise in his throat. Oh, yes it had been a good day, a very satisfying day. He saw again, in his mind's eye, that afternoon's scene in the Rathaus. He could congratulate himself. As the representative of the Republic he had behaved with dignity and restraint. No venom, no anger, none of your blustering, brutal Prussianism. He had shown them how a Frenchman behaves to a beaten enemy. He ran his tongue over his lips, as though he were remembering a delicious wine. How the leader of the deputation—little mean rat of a fellow—had winced and cringed under his remorseless suavity.

"You ask for milk for your children, messieurs. My little son was at Rouse during your occupation. There was no milk for French children there. And so my son died. As to your invalids, I myself was prisoner for two years in one of your camps. They amputated my arm there—without anæsthetics. It appears there was some temporary shortage and your own people came first. Naturally. Chacun à son tour, messieurs."

And they had withered away before him, cringing, beaten, with hollow, aghast eyes. And he had made them a little bow, perfectly courteous.

Oh yes, that had done him good. It was like a feast after a long hunger. During those endless two years of horror he had dreamed of just such a scene, rehearsing it over and over again, adding a touch here and there. As a Frenchman one had to observe the decencies. One was civilized. One used the rapier. One made elegant gestures. But one killed all the same.

Yes, very satisfying. He sighed and shifted his position. But it was like a feast that never satisfied you. You got up from the table with a kind of rage—a more terrible rage each time, so that it was difficult to restrain yourself. You saw red—you wanted to take someone by the throat. He knew that it was bad for him. It was bad for anyone to be constantly frustrated. What he really wanted was to be at peace—to live in the country quietly with his wife—to keep chickens—to be a bluff and kindly fellow, loved by everyone.

But he couldn't go. Not until he was satisfied.

It was the War. The Germans. The swine——

"The swine!" he said aloud.

His secretary leant towards him with a little deprecating gesture of understanding.

"That's what they are," he said—"swine."

Monsieur Leforges threw back his head. He talked rather loudly and emphatically, as though he were addressing a public meeting.

"There must be no sentimentalism," he said. "Sentimentalists are more dangerous than scoundrels. They knock a murderer down and then they help him up again so that he can murder someone else. We are at least a logical people. We know what the Germans are—we have experienced them in our flesh. Any man who has seen what I have seen——" He gave an exclamation, bitter and ironic. There was no need to convince his secretary, and yet he felt himself driven by an odd necessity to convince someone. "Look what they have done," he said. He threw out his hand. With swift, dramatic sentences he painted a world in ruins. He had his race's gift for self-expression, and one saw the red horror of it all—the torture, the bestiality, the grey misery. "Let them die," he said. "Let the children die. They are a bad people. They are like rats. They breed like rats. If I find a baby rat in my house I don't wait for it to grow up—I stamp on it."

He nodded and looked about him, strong and convinced. But there was only one other person in the carriage besides the secretary—the little girl with the absurd crêpe hat over one ear, and the black-gloved hands and the dangling black legs. She was looking at him too. It was oddly disconcerting. Her eyes behind the round glasses stared as though they were looking beyond him to something else—something

terrifying. Well, that was natural. He had forgotten her. He had said things unfit for a child's ears. He shrugged his shoulders in the loose-fitting overcoat and cleared his throat and felt for his cigar-case. Then a whimsical kindliness overcame him. After all, even a plain child was a child. He bent towards her gallantly as though she had been a grown woman.

"Vous permettez, mademoiselle?"

She started violently.

"Ich verstehe nicht——"

He sat back, frowning.

German—a German little girl.

"Ah, you don't understand French?"

"Mais—mais oui, monsieur."

She continued to stare at him Was the child an imbecile, he wondered angrily. For he was very angry—bitterly, absurdly angry. He made a sound that was meant for a laugh and grimaced at his companion with a rudeness that he had been careful not to show to that deputation. Then he lit his cigar and smoked in silence. He went on with his thoughts. But they had lost their clarity. It was as though someone had rudely interrupted him. Besides, he was tired. It had been a satisfying but a hard day.

He composed himself to sleep.

But he couldn't sleep either. Each time he opened his eyes there was the little girl in her dim corner, like a black image of an unutterable sorrow, staring at him.

VI

THE train drew alongside the quay at midnight, and instantly the sleeping-carriages burst into a distracted activity. The passengers leaned out of the windows and supplicated the porters, and the porters stormed along the corridors, banging the luggage against the sides and not caring in the least. Trüdchen had never seen a confusion like that. A big man in a blue green blouse seized her Handgepäck from her and yelled a number which she didn't hear. She was quite sure that her little bag was lost for ever. Nothing would ever find itself again.

It was raining. The long slanting lines shone in the lamplight. The platforms gleamed blackly. Men pushing great trollies or staggering under impossible loads lurched in and out of the dripping darkness like lost souls. Everyone looked pale and tired and irritable. The air was bitter and sticky with a strange scent. Trüdchen had never smelt the sea before. It frightened her. It lay outside there in the night like a wild beast, waiting.

People eddied fretfully. Nobody saw the little girl in black—or if they did, they did not think about her. Of course she belonged to somebody. They jostled her and carried her along like a piece of driftwood, to the passport barrier. Everyone showed their passports. It was just a friendly formality. But when Trüdchen came, the official grew more official. He read her name out and compared it with a list and looked at her hard as though he were making up his mind to remember her next time. The people behind fidgeted. Everyone saw that she was different.

A baby rat! That was what the big Frenchman had said. You put your foot on it and the little bones went crunch-crunch. She began to shake all over. It was very cold. And she had always been so frightened of rats. This great barn-like place might be full of them. She was a baby rat herself—black, scurrying, terrified amidst all these big people who hated her. And at any moment one of them might——

She slipped out of the shed on to the open quay. A wet wind swept across its terrifying emptiness and nearly blew her off her feet. She saw the sinister gleam of water, and lights that swung with a wicked magic in the black air. A ship loomed over her. She didn't think of it as a ship. It was a live thing full of bright eyes that stared malevolently. She was hustled up a narrow plank into its very jaws. She didn't know where to go. The people round her seemed to be growing bigger and bigger. They were trampling on her. She beat against them with her hands, saying, "Oh, please—please," trying to escape. They looked down at her, half impatient. They thought she was lost and looking for someone. But there was no one for her to look for.

Then she was quite alone in the dark. She couldn't escape. A barrier, high as her head, stopped her short, and underneath she could hear something talking to her very softly. She couldn't quite hear what it said, but she felt that if she listened very hard she would understand, and she did not want to. She put her hands to her ears and crouched down on a coil of rope, hiding.

Gradually the tumult died down. The passengers had gone to their quarters. The gangways were being withdrawn. The great ship shook itself and began to churn the water into foam. The gurgling, intermittent whisper stopped, and then became a hiss. They were moving. Trüdchen sat up and saw the dock lights slide away behind them. It was almost as though the land had been her home. Something inside her was being torn out.

Her teeth chattered. But she wasn't crying. Crying wouldn't ward off the horror that was creeping all around her, closer and closer. She could hear its soft fluttering footfalls. Its myriad soft black bodies whisked against her. Rats—big rats—baby rats. Why, her father must have been a rat—a huge, horrible creature that did horrible things until at last someone had stamped on him too. He had seemed so splendid—she had been so proud of him. Often the thought of his wonderfulness had kept her brave when she had been cold and hungry. But perhaps rats were like that. Perhaps they were proud of themselves and of each other. They didn't know how everyone hated them or why—they didn't see they were different. Frau Hildebrandt and the Frau Bäckerin—they seemed like everyone else—ordinary people. But you couldn't tell—you thought you were just ordinary yourself. But you weren't—everyone else knew. And they said it would have been better if you hadn't been born, so that you wouldn't grow up. They wanted to put their foot on you and crunch the life out of you, they hated you so.

The rats had hated her mother. They had hated her. There wasn't anywhere in the world where you could go—to escape.

She stood up. The ship lurched and flung her heavily against the bulwarks. She could hear the water talking to her underneath. The foam was like a white woman gliding alongside and beckoning. Perhaps her mother——

Her father and mother were dead. They were safe. When you were dead, people didn't worry about you any more. They let you go. She remembered a mouse they had killed in their house once. Her father's Bursche had trapped it in the kitchen and everyone had screamed at the poor thing trembling and shrinking in its corner and said, "How disgusting!—how filthy!" But when it was dead—all limp and quiet, and not afraid any more—they had just picked it up and put it in the dustbin and forgotten it.

It was easy to be dead. Death was just round the corner. There was little Franz Schumacher, her class-mate, who had thrown himself out of the window because he couldn't do his lessons. His teachers had been so cross and cruel to him. But afterwards they were sorry. They saw how unhappy he had been. They sent wreaths to his funeral.

The small rain had soaked the crêpe hat through and through so that it hung comically about her ears. It soaked through the thin coat to her little starving bones. But she didn't know. She didn't even know that she was thinking vast, terrible thoughts about life and death, or that she, Gertrude auf und zu und von Arnstein-Prutwitz, was trying to find a way out from men's hatred of one another.

VII

THE crossing from the Hook to England is an all-night affair, and Monsieur Leforges went straight down to his cabin. He was very tired. But before he had taken off his overcoat he knew that he would not be able to sleep. It had been a wonderful day. But it often happened that after he had been peculiarly successful he would toss the whole night through. Nerves, of course. It was high time he retired. Only a sense of duty kept him going. The War had deprived men of their youth and their old age too.

"I shall go for a stroll on deck," he told his secretary, who intruded a sleek head to inquire after his well-being; "the fresh air will quiet me down."

The deck was deserted. The wind swept it with an invisible broom. You could see the water scudding before it. The ship pitched heavily and the stern-lights rose and fell like the tail of a see-saw. Monsieur Leforges was an old sea-dog. He liked a storm—a fight. But to-night he was too tired. He would have been glad of a little quiet.

He pulled his cap well down, dug his hands into his pockets. He had plenty to occupy his mind—there was the meeting with an English Cabinet Minister to-morrow and the task of telling that gentleman in the suavest possible manner that he was a sentimentalist and a fool. An amusing,

satisfying task well suited to Monsieur Leforges's temper. But instead he thought about his little dead son.

There wasn't anything new in that. He was always thinking about him, but in terms of a glacial, relentless passion. He wore his memory like a hair-shirt that exasperated him to fresh energy. But to-night he thought of him as himself—as the little boy he had known. He wondered what he had looked like before the end. He must have had a small sunken white face and round staring eyes. He must have looked at his captors and tyrants with just that expression of bewilderment and grief—not angry, but with the tragic resignation of childhood. And his captors had rattled their sabres and thought, "Starve and be damned to you, little French swine!"

Monsieur Leforges walked up and down, up and down. He seemed to himself utterly alone on a phantom-ship steaming to an unknown destination. A wonderful day—the culmination of all his ambition. But his heart was tired—dead tired.

What had become of her—of that little girl? How she had stared at him from her dim corner! He had seen her once since then, standing on the quay, blown about by the wind and the rain like a stray wisp of unregarded life—so utterly forlorn. He had nearly spoken to her. But not quite.

Of course she hadn't understood a word. It wasn't likely. He had talked fast and angrily. Not a clever child, either—half-witted probably, with those round, unflinching eyes that hadn't seemed to see him at all. And yet there had been a look of rather awful understanding. Well, what did it matter? He had spoken the truth.

How old was she? She was so stunted-looking you couldn't tell. Eight or ten perhaps. She and Robert might have played together. They might have played the same games with the same toys. Children did—all over the world. There was a sort of understanding between children. Later on something happened to them.

He stood still, staring down at the black rolling water. He was more than tired. He was unhappy. He knew now that he was a desperately unhappy man. It seemed to him that his heart lay like an aching stone in his breast. Other people lost their children. They grew resigned. Their memories were golden and lovely. His had turned to poison. They were slowly killing him.

Oh, Robert—little Robert!

Bitter tears came into his eyes. He turned away ashamed and walked on. He had passed beyond the shelter of the upper deck and was battling against the full force of the wind when he saw her.

At first he didn't believe. It was a shadow — an hallucination — a phantom among the phantoms of his brain. But his breath had stopped. Then he knew—knew with a horror of certainty that choked the cry in his throat. He was like a man in a nightmare. It seemed that whole minutes elapsed before he began to run. And then his feet were leaden. They stumbled and slipped. The wind pushed him back with invisible hands. It caught his voice and flung it behind him. All the time he could see her. She was climbing slowly, painfully. She might have been trying to climb over a stile. There was something so simple and innocent about her movements. Only the sea and the wind and the tossing ship were sinister. Now she was standing almost upright—like a small, fantastic figure-head against the flying darkness. She seemed to be looking intently at something far beneath her. Her glasses dropped off—he saw them fall—then her little hands went up, covering her eyes.

He never knew whether she heard him shout. He reached her. He caught the short, dripping skirt. He dragged her back and she fell against him. A ship's lantern threw its ghostly light into their two faces as they stared aghast at one another. For that moment they were not man and child, but two equals, considering the whole grief and pitifulness of existence.

Her hands were pressed against his chest. She said, simply, with an odd dignity:

"Please—let me go."

But he held her closer to him. He felt as though he were fighting her. He spoke in German—hardly knowing that he did so:

"Poor little girl—armes kleines Mädchen!"

Her arms dropped. Something seemed to break in her. He could almost hear it—like the snapping of a taut wire. The next instant she was clinging to him. The little terrible hands groped and clutched at him as though they were seeking his very heart. And she cried. He had never dreamed that a child could cry like that. He thought her whole body must be torn asunder. And

Monsieur Leforges cried too. His own heart melted in an answering anguish.

"Don't—don't—there, it's all right now. God forgive us all!"

He sat down on the dripping coil of rope. He drew her close to him under the shelter of his coat. He kissed her. All the German tendernesses he had ever heard of came to his stiff lips. He could feel how she grew quiet—listening. She was like a little bird, warming its half-dead body against his.

"Tell me, why did you—how could you—you poor baby——"

They had forgotten the wind and the rain. They were like two lovers. They clung together. They were quite alone. For a while they were silent, and then, very slowly and haltingly, Fräulein Gertrude von Prutwitz-Arnstein opened her heart to Monsieur Jules Leforges

She told him about the rats—the baby rats.

And Monsieur Leforges stared into the darkness and grieved over himself and the whole world.

VIII

AMONG those who waited on the station platform was a tall, grey-haired man—military in type—who looked as though the Continental train, then curling round the bend, was bringing him no happiness. He too was thinking of his dead son and of Gertrude auf und zu und von Arnstein-Prutwitz. He was hating her. It seemed to him an ironic insult to his grief that he should have to bring into his home a child bearing that name.

But as the great train drew to a standstill he squared his shoulders. After all, he had made up his mind. It was his duty. He had to go through with it. He wouldn't show what he felt. Anyhow, she would be in the hands of governesses; you couldn't send a child with that name to school—not yet. He himself would go abroad.

There were few passengers. No children. He stood looking about him perplexedly. A square-built foreigner stared at him and then lifted his cap. He spoke in careful English:

"Are you by any chance Sir Ambrose Hampden?"

The tall man bowed.

"You are awaiting your grandchild," the Frenchman persisted.

Sir Ambrose flinched. He had never thought of Gertrude von Arnstein-Prutwitz as a grandchild.

He nodded.

"She doesn't seem to be here," he said coldly.

"She is here—in my charge. But first I want a word with you."

It was all very peremptory and astonishing. But there was something about this Frenchman—something rather desperate, as though the man didn't care what happened so long as he did what he had to do. The two strangers walked up and down the platform. The Frenchman talked rapidly with a rare but expressive gesture. The English Cabinet Minister was waiting for him. That didn't matter. And then all at once both men stood still, facing one another. The Englishman had not so much as lifted a hand. But he had said, "God! God!" and then Monsieur Leforges drew a long breath of relief.

"So you see why I had to speak to you first. After all—I have lost my son too. But if you do not want her, say so. She shall be in his place. I cannot bear any more unhappy children——"

Sir Ambrose Hampden blinked his grey lashes.

"Better go and pick her up, hadn't we?" he said.

They found her sleeping in her corner. What had he expected? Some monster of insolent hideousness? He hardly knew. At least not this little black, crumpled heap of broken-hearted weariness. Her hat—what was left of it—lay on the seat beside her.

Her head drooped. Not beautiful in any way, but with a kind of dignity—the dignity of much sorrow. He bent over her and touched her gently. Her eyes opened. They looked at him short-sightedly, and he saw that they were his daughter's eyes—his son's eyes. His own face broke like a mask. He laid his big hand on her starved one.

"Trüdchen," he said—"so you've come home at last."

A Glass of Whisky

And its bearing upon a mysterious crime

By "SAPPER"

"IT'S as easy as shelling peas to be a detective in fiction," grunted the barrister. "He's merely the author of the yarn disguised as a character, and he knows the solution before he starts."

"But the reader doesn't, if the story is told well," objected the doctor. "And that's all that matters."

"Oh! I grant you that," said the barrister, lighting a cigar. "I'm not inveighing against the detective story—I love 'em. All I'm saying is that in life a detective's job is a very different matter to—well, take the illustrious example—to that of Sherlock Holmes. He's got to make the crime fit to the clues, not the clues fit into the crime. It's not so terribly difficult to reconstruct the murder of the Prime Minister from a piece of charred paper discovered in the railway refreshment-room at Bath—in fiction; it's altogether a different matter in reality."

The soldier thoughtfully filled his pipe.

"And yet there have been many cases when the reconstruction has been made on some clue almost equally 'flimsy,'" he murmured.

"A few," conceded the barrister. "But nine out of ten are built up with laborious care. The structure does not rest on any one fact—but on a whole lot of apparently unimportant and trivial ones. Of course it's more spectacular to bring a man to the gallows because half a brick was found lying on the front door-step, but in practice it doesn't happen."

"It does—sometimes," remarked a quiet, sandy-haired man who was helping himself to a whisky and soda. "It does sometimes, you man of law. Your remarks, coupled with my present occupation, remind me of just such a case."

"Your present occupation appears to be drinking whisky," said the doctor curiously.

"Precisely," returned the other. "Almost as prosaic a thing as our legal luminary's half-brick." He settled himself comfortably in a chair, and the others leaned forward expectantly. "And yet on that very ordinary pastime hinged an extremely interesting case: one in which I was lucky enough to play a principal part."

"The night is yet young, old man," said the barrister. "It's up to you to prove your words, and duly confound me."

The sandy-haired man took a sip of his drink, then he put the glass on the table beside him and began.

"Well, if it won't bore you, I'm agreeable. I'll tell you the whole thing exactly as it took place, only altering the names of the people involved. It happened before the war—in that hot summer of 1911, to be exact. I'd been working pretty hard in London, and about the end of July I got an invitation to go down and stop with some people in Devonshire. I will call them the Marleys, and they lived just outside a small village on the north coast. The family consisted of old Marley, who was a man rising sixty, and his two daughters, Joan and Hilda. There was also Jack Fairfax, through whom, as a matter of fact, I had first got to know them.

"Jack was about my own age—thirty odd, and we'd been up at Cambridge together. He was no relation to old Marley, but he was an orphan, and Marley was his guardian, or had been when Jack was a youngster. And from the very first Jack and the old man had not got on.

"Marley was not everybody's meat, by a long way—rather a queer-tempered, secretive blighter; and Jack Fairfax had the devil of a temper at times. When he was a boy he had no alternative except to do as his guardian told him, but even in those early days, as I gathered subsequently, there had been frequent storms. And when he came down from Cambridge there were two or three most unholy rows, which culminated in Jack leaving the house for good.

"It was apparently this severance from the two girls, whom he had more or less

regarded as sisters, which caused the next bust-up. And this one, according to Jack, was in the nature of a volcanic eruption. The two girls had come up to London to go through the season with some aunt, and Jack had seen a good deal of them, with the net result that he and Joan had fallen in love with each other. Then the fat was in the fire. Jack straightway had gone down to Devonshire to ask old Marley's consent; old Marley had replied in terms which, judging from Jack's account of the interview, had contained a positive profusion of un-Parliamentary epithets. Jack had lost his temper properly, and—well, you know, the usual thing. At anyrate, the long and short of it was that old Marley had recalled both his daughters from London, and had sworn that if he ever saw Jack near the house again he'd pepper him with a shotgun. To which Jack had replied that only his grey hairs and his gout saved Mr. Marley from the biggest hiding he'd ever had in his life—even if not the biggest he deserved. With which genial exchange of playful badinage, I gathered, the interview ended. And that was how matters stood when I went down in July, 1911.

"For some peculiar reason the old man liked me, even though I was a friend of Jack's. And in many ways I quite liked him, though there was always something about him which defeated me. Of course, he had a foul temper—but it wasn't altogether that. He seemed to me at times to be in fear of something or somebody; and yet, though I say that now, I don't know that I went as far as thinking so at the time. It was an almost indefinable impression—vague and yet very real.

"The two girls were perfectly charming, though they were both a little afraid of their father. How long it would have taken Joan to overcome this timidity, and go to Jack without her father's consent, I don't know. And incidentally, as our legislators say, the question did not arise. Fate held the ace of trumps, and proceeded to deal it during my visit."

The sandy-haired man leant back in his chair and crossed his legs deliberately.

"I think it was about the fourth day after I arrived," he went on, after a while, "that the tragedy happened. We were sitting in the drawing-room after dinner—a couple of men whose names I forget, and a girl friend of Hilda's. Hilda herself was there, and Joan, who seemed very preoccupied, had come in about a quarter of an hour previously. I had noticed that Hilda had looked at her sister inquiringly as she entered, and that Joan had shrugged her shoulders. But nothing had been said, and naturally I asked no questions with the others there, though from the air of suppressed excitement on Joan's face I knew there was something in the wind.

"Old Marley himself was not with us; he was in his study at the other end of the house. The fact was not at all unusual; he frequently retired to his own den after dinner, sometimes joining the rest of the party for a few minutes before going to bed, more often not appearing again till the following morning. And so we all sat there talking idly, with the windows wide open and the light shining out on to the lawn. It must have been somewhere about ten to a quarter past when suddenly Hilda gave a little scream.

"'What do you want?' she cried. 'Who are you?'

"I swung round in my chair, to find a man standing on the lawn outside, in the centre of the light. He was facing us, and as we stared at him he came nearer till he was almost in the room. And the first thing that struck me was that he looked a little agitated.

"'You will excuse me appearing like this,' he said, 'but——' He broke off and looked at me. 'Might I have a word with you alone, sir?'

"I glanced at the others. Obviously he was a stranger. No trace of recognition appeared on anyone's face, and I began to feel a little suspicious.

"'What is it?' I cried. 'What can you possibly want to speak to me about that you can't say now?'

"He shrugged his shoulders slightly. 'As you will,' he answered. 'My idea was to avoid frightening the ladies. In the room at the other end of the house a man has been murdered.'

"For a moment everyone was too thunderstruck to reply; then Hilda gave a choking cry.

"'What sort of a man?' she said breathlessly.

"'An elderly man of, I should think, about sixty,' returned the other gravely, and Hilda buried her face in her hands.

"'I will come with you at once, sir,' I said hurriedly, and the two other men rose. Instinctively, I think, we all knew it must

be old Marley; there was no one else it could be. But the sudden shock of it had dazed us all. I glanced at Joan. She was staring at the man like a girl bereft of her senses, and I put my hand reassuringly on her shoulder. And then she looked up at me, and the expression in her eyes pulled me together. It was like a cold douche, and it acted instantaneously. Because it wasn't horror or dazed stupefaction that I read on her face, it was terror—agonized terror. And suddenly I remembered her air of suppressed excitement earlier in the evening."

Once again the sandy-haired man paused while the others waited in silence for him to continue.

"It was old Marley right enough," he went on quietly. "We walked round the front of the house until we came to the window of his study, and there we paused instinctively. The window was open, and Marley was sitting at his desk quite motionless. His head had fallen forward, and on his face was a look of dreadful fear.

"For a while none of us moved. Then, with an effort, I threw my leg over the window-sill and entered.

"'He's quite dead,' I said, and I felt my voice was shaking. 'We'd better send for the police.'

"The others, now in the room, nodded, and in silence I picked up the telephone.

"'Mr. Marley's been killed,' I heard myself saying. 'Will you send someone up at once?'

"And then for the first time I noticed the poker lying beside the chair, and saw the back of the old man's head. It wasn't a pretty sight, and one of the other men staying in the house—a youngster—turned very white, and went to the window.

"'Pretty obvious how it was done,' said the stranger quietly. 'Well, gentlemen, nothing ought to be touched in this room until the police arrive. I suggest that we should draw the curtains and go somewhere else to wait for them.'

"I don't think any of us were sorry to fall in with his suggestion. I also don't think I've ever drunk such a large whisky-and-soda as I did a few minutes later. Discovering the body had been bad enough; breaking the news to the two girls was going to be worse.

"It was Joan who met me in the hall—and we stared at one another in silence. Then I nodded my head stupidly.

"'It's father,' she whispered. 'Oh, my God!'

"I put out my hand to steady her, and she was looking at me with a fixed stare.

"'Don't you understand?' she muttered hoarsely, and swallowing all the time. 'Don't you understand? Jack has been here to-night.'

"'Jack!' I looked at her foolishly. 'Jack!'

"And then her full meaning struck me.

"'How did that man find out?' she whispered. 'And who is he?'

"'I don't know. I'll go and ask him.' I was still trying to adjust this new development—and her next words seemed to come from a great distance.

"'Do something! For God's sake—do something!'

"Then she turned and left me, and I watched her go up the stairs, walking stiffly and clinging to the banisters.

"So Jack had been there! And old Marley was dead! Murdered! Hit on the head with a poker. And Jack had been there. It's only in romantic fiction that the reader is expected to assume the impossibility of the hero committing a crime, owing to the extreme beauty of his nature. And this wasn't romantic fiction. It was hard, brutal reality. The two facts stood there, side by side, in all their dazzling simplicity. Jack's nature was not supremely beautiful. He was an ordinary man, with the devil of a temper when it was roused.

"Mechanically, I started to walk back to the room where I had left the other three men. They were sitting in silence when I entered, and after a while the stranger got up.

"'A dreadful thing to happen,' he said gravely.

"'May I ask, sir,' I began, 'how you came to discover it?'

"'Very simply,' he answered. 'I was strolling along the road, going back to the village inn where I have been stopping for two or three nights, when I saw the window of the room through the trees. The light was shining out, and I could see someone sitting at the desk. More out of idle curiosity than anything else, I paused for a moment or two, and then something began to arouse my suspicions. The man at the desk seemed so motionless. I thought perhaps he had fainted, or was ill, and after a little hesitation I went in at the gate and looked through the window. To my horror I saw he was dead—

and I at once came round to the other room from which the light was shining, and where I found you.'

"'There is a point which may have some bearing on the crime,' he continued, after a pause. 'On my way up from the inn a man passed me. He was coming from this direction, and seemed to me to be in a very excited condition. It was his obvious agitation that made me notice him at the time, though in the dim light I couldn't see his face very clearly. But he was swinging his stick in the air, and muttering to himself. At the moment I didn't think much about it. But now——' He shrugged his shoulders slightly. 'Of course, I may be completely wrong, but I think it is a thing worth mentioning to the police.'

"'Would you know the man again?' I asked, trying to speak quite normally.

"'Well, he was tall—six feet at least—and broad. And he was clean-shaven.' He spoke thoughtfully, weighing his words. 'I might know him again—but I wouldn't swear to it. One has to be doubly careful if a man's life is at stake.'

"I turned away abruptly. Jack was tall and broad and clean-shaven. Strive as I would, the deadly suspicion was beginning to grip me that Jack, in a fit of ungovernable passion, had killed the old man. And at such moments, whatever may be the legal aspect of the matter, one's main idea is how best to help a pal. If Jack had indeed done it, what was the best thing to do?

"I rang the bell, and told the scared-looking maid to bring the whisky and some glasses. Then, with a muttered apology, I left the room. I felt I wanted to talk to Joan about it. I found her dry-eyed and quite composed, though she was evidently holding herself under control with a great effort. And briefly I told her what the stranger had said.

"She heard me out in silence, then she spoke with a quiet assurance that surprised me.

"'If Jack did it,' she said, 'he doesn't know he's done it. He doesn't know he's killed—father.' She faltered a bit over the last word, and I didn't interrupt. 'What I mean is this,' she went on after a moment. 'I know Jack—better than anyone else. I know those rages of his—when he sees red. But they're over in a minute. He's capable of anything for a second or two, but if he'd done it, Hugh, if he'd hit father—and killed him—his remorse would have been dreadful. He wouldn't have run away, I'm certain of that. That's why I say that if Jack did it he doesn't know—he killed him.'

"I said nothing. It was no good telling her that it wasn't one blow, nor yet two or three, that had been used. There was no point about telling her that it was no accidental thing done unwittingly in the heat of the moment—that it was an absolute impossibility for the man who had done it to be in ignorance of the fact. And yet, though I realized all that, her simple conviction put new hope into me.

"I found that the local police had arrived—a sergeant and an ordinary constable—and had already begun their investigations. The principal evidence, of course, came from the stranger, and he repeated to them what he had already told me. His name apparently was Lenham—Victor Lenham—and the police knew he had been stopping at the local inn.

"'You saw the body through the window, sir,' said the sergeant, 'and then went round to the drawing-room?'

"'That is so, sergeant.'

"'You didn't go into the room?'

"'Not until later—with these gentlemen. You see,' he added, 'I've seen death too often not to recognize it. And as, in a way, you will understand, it was no concern of mine, I thought it advisable to have some member of the house itself with me before entering the room.'

"'Quite, sir, quite.' The sergeant nodded portentously. 'Is there anything else you can tell us?'

"'Well,' said Lenham, 'there is a point, which I have already mentioned to this gentleman.' He glanced at me, and then, turning back to the sergeant, he told him about the man he had passed on the road. And it was when he came to the description that suddenly the constable gave a whistle of excitement. The sergeant frowned on him angrily, but the worthy P.C., whose only experience of crime up to date had been assisting inebriated villagers home, had quite lost his head.

"'Mr. Fairfax, sergeant,' he exploded, 'e was down here to-night! Caught the last train, he did. Jenkins at the station told me—sure thing.'

"'Good heavens, sergeant!' I said angrily, 'what the devil is the man talking about? He surely doesn't suppose that Mr. Fairfax had anything to do with it?'

"But the mischief was done. The sergeant formally 'told off' his indiscreet subordinate, but it was obvious that it was merely an official rebuke. In a village like that everybody knows everybody else's private affairs, and the strained relations between the dead man and Jack Fairfax were common knowledge. I could see at a glance that the sergeant regarded the matter as solved already.

"'Would you recognize this man again, sir?' he demanded, and Lenham gave him the same guarded reply as he had already given to me. He might—but he wouldn't swear to it. It was impossible to be too careful in such a case, he repeated, and it was practically dark when he had passed the man.

"It was all duly noted down, and then we adjourned to the room of the tragedy. The constable—a ruddy-faced young man—turned pale when he saw the body; then he pulled himself together and assisted the sergeant in his formal examination. I didn't blame him—we were all feeling the strain, somewhat naturally. Lenham seemed the least concerned, but it wasn't a personal matter with him as it was with us, especially with me. All the time I was fidgeting round the room, subconsciously watching the stolid sergeant making notes, but with only one thought dominating my brain—how best to help Jack. Not that I had definitely made up my mind that he'd done it, but even at that stage of the proceedings I realized that appearances were against him. And Joan's words were ringing in my head—'For God's sake—do something.'

"After a while I crossed the room to a small table on which a tantalus of whisky and two glasses were standing. I looked at the tray—an Indian silver one which old Marley had been very proud of—with unseeing eyes. And then, mechanically, I picked up the glasses. I don't know why I did so; the action was, as I say, mechanical. They had been used—both of them; they had been used for whisky—one could tell that by the smell. And when I put the glasses down again on the tray, the sergeant was approaching with his notebook.

The sandy-haired man paused, with a reminiscent smile.

"Ever noticed how extraordinarily dense you can be at times, even with a plain fact staring you straight in the face? There was one staring at me for ten minutes that night before my grey matter began to stir."

"Just hold on a minute," interrupted the barrister. "Is this plain fact staring us in the face now?"

"No, it isn't," conceded the narrator. "At the moment you are in the position of the other people in that room. Mind you, I've left out nothing in order to mystify you; the story, as I have given it to you, is a plain, unvarnished account of what took place. But I'm out to disprove your half-brick theory, lawyer-man, and to do so with such little story-telling ability as I happen to possess.

"Now, I won't weary you with what happened during the next week, beyond saying that an inquest and a burglary took place. And the latter, at any rate, was very successful. The former moved along obvious lines, and resulted in Jack Fairfax being arrested for the wilful murder of his guardian, Roger Marley. The evidence was purely circumstantial, but it was about as damning as it could be. Jack admitted to having had an interview with Marley that night; he admitted that they had had an appalling quarrel. What was even worse was that he admitted to having struck the old man in a furious fit of rage, but beyond that he denied everything. He absolutely swore that the blow he struck Marley could not have killed him; further, that he had never handled the poker. And then, a finger-print expert proved that he had. That was the worst shock of the lot, and his explanation given afterwards that, now he came to think of it, he had picked up the poker to ram the tobacco down in his pipe convinced no one. He indignantly denied that his action in going up to London by the last train was in any sense running away; he had intended all along to go up by that train. And his reason for leaving the house after the interview without attempting to see his fiancée was that he was in such a rage with her father that he couldn't trust himself to speak to her for fear of what he might say.

"So much for Jack Fairfax's case—pretty black, as you will agree. In fact, I don't think I should be exaggerating if I said that there were only two people in England convinced of his innocence. And he was one of them. Even Joan's faith was shaken a little.

"It was on the tenth day after the inquest that I rang up the inspector who had come over from Exeter to look into the case, with a request that he would come up to the

house. I told him that I had certain information which might interest him and suggested that he might care to hear it. I also rang up Lenham at the inn, and asked him if he would mind coming along at the same time. I told him I'd discovered the burglar. By the way, I didn't tell you that it was his room that had been burgled.

"In about half an hour they arrived, and the local sergeant as well.

"'What's this about my burglar?' laughed Lenham. 'A funny fellow—because as far as I can see he didn't take anything.'

"'All in good time,' I answered, smiling. 'I've found out a lot of strange things in town.'

"Lenham looked at me quickly. 'Oh! have you been to London?' he inquired.

"'Yes,' I answered, 'for two days. Most entertaining.'

"And then the inspector chipped in impatiently:

"'Well, sir, what is it you want to say to me?' He looked at his watch suggestively.

"'First of all, inspector,' I said quietly, 'I want to ask you a question. Have you ever heard the legal maxim, *Falsum in uno, falsum in omni?*'

"I could see that he hadn't the faintest idea what I was driving at. I could also see that Lenham's eyes had suddenly become strained.

"'It means,' I went on, 'that if a witness—let us say—is proved to have told one lie, there is strong presumptive evidence that he has told several. At any rate, the value of his statement is greatly diminished. Do you agree?'

"'Certainly,' he answered. 'But I don't see——'

"'You will shortly, inspector,' I remarked. 'Now, who would you consider the principal witness against Mr. Fairfax?'

"'Mr. Fairfax himself,' said the inspector promptly.

"'And leaving him out?' I asked.

"'Well—I suppose—this gentleman here.' He nodded towards Lenham, who was sitting quite motionless, watching me.

"'Precisely,' I murmured. 'Then why was it necessary for Mr. Lenham to state that his name was Lenham, and further to swear that he had never seen Mr. Marley before—when both those statements were lies?'

"'What the devil do you mean?' snarled Lenham, rising from his chair. 'What do you mean by saying my name is not Lenham?'

"'You wanted to know about the burglar who took nothing, didn't you?' I said grimly. 'Well—I was the burglar, and I took something very valuable—an address.'

"'What on earth——' began the inspector, and then he glanced at Lenham. 'I think you'd better sit still, Mr. Lenham,' he said, quietly, 'until we have heard what this gentleman has to say.'

"Lenham sat back in his chair with a venomous look at me. Then he laughed harshly.

"'By all means, inspector,' he remarked. 'Only it is a little disconcerting to be cross-examined suddenly by a man who admits he is a thief.'

"As a matter of fact the man didn't know how much I knew—or how little; and between ourselves it was deuced little. But, watching him closely, I knew I was right, and my only hope was to bluff him into some admission.

"'Shall we endeavour to reconstruct the events of the night when Mr. Marley was murdered, Mr. Lenardi?' I began quietly. 'That is your name, is it not?—and you are a Corsican.'

"'Well,' he said, 'what if I am? I had a very good reason for changing my name.'

"'Doubtless,' I agreed. 'Let us hope your reason will prove satisfactory to the inspector. May I suggest, however—unless you can supply a better one—that your reason was to avoid the notoriety which would inevitably arise if a foreigner came to stay in a small village like this? And you were particularly anxious to avoid any possibility of Mr. Marley knowing that a Corsican was in the neighbourhood.'

"He laughed sarcastically. 'I think that I have already stated that I have never even seen Mr. Marley,' he sneered.

"'Oh!' I remarked. 'Then might I ask you, inspector, to have a look at this photograph? It is old and faded, but the faces are still clear.'

"I handed the photograph to the inspector, and with a sudden curse the Corsican whipped out a knife and sprang at me. He realized even then that the game was up, and his one thought was to revenge himself on me. But I'd been expecting some such move, and I'd got a revolver handy. Incidentally, revolver shooting is

one of the few things I can do, and I plugged him through the forearm before he could do any damage.

"He stood there glaring at me sullenly, and then the inspector took a hand.

"'Stand by that window, sergeant. Now, Mr. Whatever-your-name-is, no monkey tricks. Do you still deny that you knew Mr. Marley?'

"'I refuse to answer,' snarled the man.

"'Because this photograph is of you and Marley and a woman. Taken abroad somewhere.'

"'Naples, to be exact, inspector,' I said. 'I found it in his rooms in Berners Street, the address of which I got as the result of my burglary here.'

"The Corsican stood there like a beast at bay, and the inspector's face was stern.

"'What explanation have you got to give?' he rapped out. 'Why did you lie in evidence?'

"'I refuse to answer,' repeated the man.

"'Since he is so uncommunicative,' I remarked, 'perhaps you will allow me to reconstruct the crime. Much of it, of necessity, is guess-work. For instance, Lenardi, what was your motive in murdering Mr. Marley?' I rapped the question out at him, and though he'd have killed me willingly if he could have got at me, he didn't deny it.

"'Well,' I continued, 'it doesn't matter. Let us assume it was the girl in that photograph. You tracked Marley to earth here—in this village—that is all that concerns us. And having tracked him, you bided your time. Vengeance is the sweeter for delay. Each evening you walked up here, watching him through the window—gloating over what was to come. And then one night you found another man with him—Jack Fairfax—and they were quarrelling. At once you saw that this was your opportunity. However skilfully you hid your traces under ordinary circumstances, there was always a grave risk; but here, ready to hand, was a marvellous stroke of luck. Perhaps you crept nearer the window in the darkness, secure in the fact that the room was in a remote part of the house. You saw Jack Fairfax leave, blind with rage, and then, skulking out of the night, you entered the room yourself.'

"'It's a lie!' shouted the Corsican, but his lips were white.

"'And then old Marley saw you, and the rage on his face was replaced by a dreadful terror. He knew what you had come for. I don't think you wasted much time, Lenardi. You picked up the poker with a gloved hand—oh! you were taking no chances—and you battered his head in. And then, Lenardi—and then you drank a whisky-and-soda. You drank a whisky-and-soda, and then you decided on a very bold move: you came and alarmed the rest of the house. It was clever of you, but——"

The sandy-haired man smiled thoughtfully.

"We sprang forward together—the inspector and I; but we were too late. The Corsican had swallowed poison before we could stop him. He was dead in half a minute, and he never spoke again. So I can only assume that my imagination was not far off the rails."

"Yes, but hang it, man," said the barrister peevishly, "the whole thing was a pure fluke on your part."

"I've never laid any claim to being a detective," murmured the sandy-haired man mildly, rising and helping himself to some more whisky. "All that I said was that there are times when you can build an entire case from your half-brick or its equivalent. And when you find two glasses both smelling strongly of whisky in a room, you assume that two people have drunk whisky. Which was where the Corsican tripped up. You see, he distinctly swore he hadn't entered the room till he came in with us."

The barrister raised protesting hands to the ceiling.

"The man is indubitably mad," he remarked to no one in particular. "Was not Fairfax in the room most of the evening?"

The sandy-haired man looked even more mild.

"I think that perhaps I ought to have mentioned one fact sooner, but I was afraid it would spoil the story. The cat has an aversion to water; fish have an aversion to dry land. But both these aversions pale into total insignificance when compared to Jack Fairfax's aversion to whisky."

He gazed thoughtfully at his glass.

"A strange flaw in an otherwise fine character. Thank heavens, the symptom is not common!"

In Round Stone Valley

An amazing match and a double event

By VINGIE E. ROE

ROUND STONE VALLEY was an untamed paradise. Bright waters slaked it, and little winds, dipping down from the great strata above, whirled and eddied all up and down its length like invisible elves.

It lay in the heart of the hills far removed from the disturbing voice of civilization, and its life was the primeval life of the early days.

Cattle ran in its lush meadows and wandered in the mountains that girt it, and once in a while a band of wild horses came down to feed on its bounty, while a considerable settlement of Digger Indians still lived at its lower end, where the Little River went out to the sea.

It was nine miles long and half that wide, and for sixty years it had been a kingdom to John Caloran and his father before him.

The first log house, built by the pioneer of solid timbers for a fort against all foes, still stood, though it had been added to until the huge structure at the valley's head looked like a feudal stronghold.

Great barns stored the winter's hay, and palisaded corrals held the pride of John Caloran's heart, namely, his horses.

Twenty years before a stranger had come into the lost little valley—a sharp-eyed, long-haired man with a gambler's hands—and he had brought with him Red Fire—Red Fire, stamping and screaming in his beauty and his pride, a creature of the gods, perfect, unmatchable. John Caloran was forty years old, and he had always had a dream of great horses that should some day people the Round Stone Valley; and when he beheld the stallion he visioned its fulfilling. Therefore he set out to bargain with the stranger, and for a week the offers and rejections snapped back and forth. At its end the gambler went quietly away with a buckskin bag bulging with raw gold, and Red Fire ramped in his pen. John Caloran stood and viewed him with surging joy, and he did not know that the stranger went north with a grin on his sardonic face and wondered when the hue and cry at Sacramento for the stolen racer of the year would send its waves into Round Stone Valley.

The fact of the matter was that it never did, and the most glorious horse of his reckless day was completely lost to his victories.

Red Fire had long been a memory, but in this particular spring his children and his children's children roared up and down the open meadows, fleet and free as the winds about them. John Caloran, big, portly, keen, dark of eye and skin and white of hair, watched them with a pride that had grown and deepened with the years. Roan-red and blood-bay they circled and played on the green carpet, and they were beautiful as it was possible for flesh and blood to be. And they were fast. There was Roanoke, twelve years old and a brood mare, yet she could do her 2.50 in a straightaway on the turf. And Redbird, eight, could better that a bit.

There was Blue Fire, next in line, and Flutter Flame, his twin, both out of Roanoke and sired by the big red roan who had for seven years led his wild band south by the Round Stone Valley every spring.

John Caloran had raged at Roanoke's vagrancy and had threatened to kill her foal, but when he beheld the twin colts he could not, and when they were ten months old he fairly tore his hair at the memory of his contemplated folly—for Blue Fire and Flutter Flame could run away from the majority of the horses even then.

And marvellous creatures they were, slim-legged, slim-barrelled, deep in the chest for wind, high-hipped for speed, and they were so exactly alike that only those who knew them well could tell them apart. Bright roan-red, with the slightly deeper manes and tails that go with that colour, they matched each other, at every point, of high head, slender neck, blowing nostrils, dark eyes, sharp ears; and differed only in the fact that in Flutter Flame those same

sharp ears were lightly tipped with black—a freak departure.

They were the darlings of the ranch to the master's heart—even ranking Lacey, the sole child of the family, so the miners and cowboys whispered with a certain indignation, for Lacey Caloran was well calculated to stir up emotions. She was nineteen and the spit of her father, keen, dark, handsome, and full of the spirit of the winds, the clouds and the rushing sweet waters of her native hills. She could ride with any lithe young Indian at the valley's foot where the cabins stood by the Little River, she could shoot and tramp and swim with the best of them. She could swear like a man, and did upon occasion, but the smile that backed her words would have disarmed a preacher. She had never been far from the Round Stone Valley, had never seen a railroad nor been inside a church. She did not know that she had a soul and cared not at all. And withal she was adorable. No heart in the world was tenderer than hers, quicker to respond to suffering, no temper swifter to fire at violation of her simple principles of the square deal.

She was built like a young Juno, straight and strong with a depth of breast and a lung power that augured for ninety years at least.

And of all those that came under the dominion of John Caloran, the miners, the cowboys, the Indians, the timid woman who served him faithfully, she alone was without fear of him.

And if he loved his fleet-footed horses, she worshipped them.

From daylight to dark she was among them, sailing down the meadows on one, coming back on another, swinging, swaying, doing all the tricks she had ever heard of, and she was a past-master of many. She went without saddle, bridle, or strap, and her black head was bare to the sun. She was almost as brown as Wallulah, who smoked the salmon from the Little River and tended her babies in the cabin under the big maple tree, and in a way she was as primitive. When they sat together cross-legged on a blanket in the shade, and rolled the two-year-old in play after the immemorial fashion of women with a child, a beholder might well have taken Lacey Caloran for a breed, though she had not a drop of the blood.

The Indians loved her and were as a mat to her feet, collectively.

They would have gone through fire, flood and famine for her, and she squandered herself upon them in many ways. More than once she stood between them and her father, on whose lands they lived, when someone had displeased him; more than one benefit and privilege she wheedled out of him for them. And she was not above pitting her cunning wits against him to gain them a better wage at the cattle-riding.

None of this escaped old John Caloran's eyes, and he chuckled in private, much as he chuckled when young Flutter Flame cut a second off his record for the distance between Seven Oaks and the Standing Rock.

His horses and his daughter—his daughter and his horses.

Only John Caloran himself knew which he loved the best.

¶

And so a certain spring came walking in majesty over the bulwarking hills and found the Round Stone Valley sweet as Paradise in its scented green. Great snows had melted out of the mountains and swollen the Little River to a raging torrent, had soaked the meadows to bedrock and set the grass to growing. Then the sun had come out of the fleecy grey rain-clouds, and all the world of the ranch was beautiful and warm with winey airs that set the red to glowing in healthy cheeks, put thoughts of the solitudes in prospectors' heads. The Indians were busy tilling their little patches of land, and Lacey Caloran was busiest of all—helping her mother with the housework, feeding the orphaned fawn that Tom Cochran had brought in, wet and trembling, on his saddle-horse, fussing with the hens that wanted to set, quelling the scraps that continually welled up between Buck and Chip, the two dogs, and taking the first long rides on the horses. They were keen and nifty, these handsome creatures, old Roanoke, Redbird, Spirtle, High Light, Blue Fire and Flutter Flame, with the confinement of the long winter.

John Caloran, leaning on the corral fence, watched her with a smile, while Tom Cochran and Dick Murtree and a dozen others held their breath with fear for her.

"John," said young Murtree, who hailed from the Black Bear Mine, "she's got no business on them colts. Take my word for it, they'll kill her some day."

The rancher's dark eyes narrowed a moment.

"Son," he answered with smiling in-

solence, "them colts an' that girl are th' best in th' country. I'll take a chance on 'em."

On one of these fair spring days Lacey Caloran rode down the Round Stone Valley on young Blue Fire. She went by the cabins of the Indians at the valley's foot, where the Little River roared out in freshet, like a streak of colour. She waved a hand at the young squaw under the big tree and swerved away down the Down River trail. It was a good trail, since twice a week the mail came in to the ranch, and many pack-trains went by that way into the Big Rock Country. It followed the stream, and was sweet with ferns and flowering vines, and presently the girl pulled in the colt and made him walk. He tossed his handsome head and fretted at the bit between his teeth, the stall upon his imperious head, for Dick Murtree had given Lacey a bridle, hand-made from braided rawhide and much bedecked with tassels, and the colts resented it bitterly. They had all worn straps before and knew the feel of them, but Lacey usually rode them free. He was warm from coming down the valley, and Lacey, keen as her dad in matters of horse-flesh, kept him at a running walk. And as she rode, lithe and graceful and easy, her wide skirts fluttering at her knees, she sang.

Now, Lacey Caloran had a speaking voice like melted gold, but when she opened her ripe lips in an attempt at melody the result was indescribable. She was not backward, either, since she was the darling of all the Round Stone Valley, and she made the welkin ring.

As her sturdy lungs sent out wave after wave of sound, a rider far down the trail, and coming up, clapped his hands to his ears, dropped them, and listened with open mouth.

"I thought I'd heard some awful noises at the Bar Q bunk-house," he murmured, "but I'll be hanged if I ever heard anything like that!"

He touched the shining silver neck of the horse he rode and the latter stopped instantly. They two stood still and listened while an appreciative grin widened on the man's lean face.

They did not move, and so presently the singer—save the mark!—came round the bend in the river trail and face to face with the stranger.

Young Blue Fire squatted and jumped, but Lacey quelled him with a quick and heavy hand, and for a moment the four young things, there in the ancient wilderness, stared at each other. And they were well worth looking at, for it was the pick of Round Stone Valley that the stranger saw, while Lacey Caloran—her father's own daughter—looked for a fleeting second at Bobbie Burt and then gaped in wonder at the silver horse.

Stiff-legged, prideful, vivid, his nostrils flaring at the sudden sight of another horse, his trappings glittering with silver, his great dark tail flowing softly to his heels, his mane like a dusky cloud above his arching neck—it was Smoky Face, the king, who barred the trail.

With the quick appraising of John Caloran himself, Lacey's eyes studied him point by point. Then they lifted to his master and studied him. It was a slim youth she saw, browned, hard with outdoor life, and withal an alien. He was never born in the hidden valleys, that she knew instinctively, even before he spoke. It may have been the quiet ease with which he supported her stare, it may have been the little smile that curved his lips, or it may have been the expression in his blue eyes that seemed to look through her. At any rate Lacey Caloran, for the first time in her care-free life, had no greeting for a stranger.

It was the man who took the initiative at last.

"Howdy," he said.

"Howdy," said Lacey. "Where you goin', Mister?"

"Why," said Bobbie Burt, "I *was* bound for a place called Round Stone Valley, but if you say so I'll go back."

At the smile which deepened with the whimsical words the girl lost her momentary confusion.

"Sure you won't," she laughed, "not till my dad sees that horse o' yours. An' I'll bet four bits you never ride him out after that."

"No?" said Bobbie; "put up."

And he reached a hand into a hip pocket. He drew out a buckskin bag and gravely took out a coin. He held it forth on his palm.

"Cover," he said, "and you may hold the stakes."

The girl's face straightened. In that country she had contracted an obligation and should, by rights, make good her words on the instant with another coin.

"Will you wait till we get to th' ranch?" she asked.

"No," said Bobbie Burt, "you've got to cover."

"Ain't got a cent," said Lacey.

"Then put up that pearl button from the neck of your blouse. You're not using it, anyway."

She put a swift hand up to the open collar that showed the round brown throat.

"All right."

Instantly the man reached out with a small pocket-knife and took the button. In the operation his knuckles brushed her cheek.

The girl took the two small stakes and put them in her own pocket.

Then she lifted her rein and struck a light heel in Blue Fire's satin side.

"Right back up th' trail," she said, "come on."

Where the trail came out in the valley Bobbie forged up alongside.

"Gee!" said his companion, "he's bigger'n Spirtle—longer in th' foreleg than Roanoke. He's some goer. He's almost a match for Flutter Flame an' Blue Fire."

"*Almost?*"

Bobbie reached out and smoothed the foretop tossing between the pointed ears.

"That's what I've come all this long way up to prove. I've heard of them."

"Say," Lacey drew up for a second, "you th' feller that's ben pullin' down all them races with th' punchers an' Indians a bit below?"

"I reckon," said Bobbie.

They rode on in silence for a while.

¶

AS they passed the encampment under the big trees some of her father's dark riders were unsaddling, for it was late noon.

Three of those keen-sighted lovers of horses looked hard at the strangers and began resaddling. Swift words went about among them, and they made ready to ride to the valley's head, for they knew the shining stallion and they knew John Caloran. They wanted to be present when the two should meet.

And that was a meeting. Never since Red Fire's day had the "look" come into the rancher's face that fired it when he beheld Smoky Face stamping at his gate—the passionate, hard, excited look of the visionary who sees his dreams come true in the flesh. He rose from his chair under the big locust trees that his father had planted and came swiftly out to the gate.

"See, dad," said Lacey, "it's th' chap we ben hearin' about below an' th' silver horse."

It was not till then that John Caloran became cognisant of the fact that there was a man attached to Smoky Face, a possible owner. He raised his eyes at last from the magnificent animal to gauge this person.

He saw a young man, a slim and graceful fellow, who sat in his saddle with a certain conscious ease.

"Where'd you get him?" he asked abruptly.

"Where'd you get this one?" said Bobbie, motioning at Blue Fire.

"H'm," said John Caloran. "'Light."

So Bobbie Burt, sometime cowpuncher on the Bar Q and a "lunger," swung his lean length out of his saddle and began to uncinch the latigos.

The Indians had followed up the valley and they now stood around looking at Smoky Face keenly. They drew apart in a group and spoke low words of certainty. Once in a certain spring these same riders had run a wild white horse all over the end of Round Stone Valley—a wonderful horse with a dusky face and a flowing tail, like smoke. He had been lean and rangy then, scarce out of his colthood, but he had been a wonder.

They stood and looked at Smoky Face and noted the improvement in all his mighty form, the perfect balance, the poise, the exact proportions that could neither spare nor take on an ounce. Then they glanced at John Caloran, licking his lips, and shook their heads.

The rancher indicated a small corral a bit apart, and here Smoky Face was installed in state.

All the long afternoon an intense court convened around the stockade. A ranch hand led out the Caloran horses one by one, a shining band in their gorgeous colours: old Roanoke, Spirtle, High Light, Redbird, and the twins.

Bobbie Burt looked at them and smiled. To him there was but one horse in the world—and he wasn't red.

"Pretty fine—pretty fine," he admitted as Spirtle stamped and squealed at the strange stallion beyond the bars, "but I'll leave them all behind."

"Will, eh?" said John Caloran grimly.

"Sure," said the boy with the cocksureness of youth.

But here the girl, who had been hanging

on the outskirts of the gathering, pushed through.

"Not if I ride 'em!" she said.

Bobbie Burt looked into her dark eyes, that were full of fire like her father's at thought of the coming race, and felt his heart gain a leap or two. He knew that here was the best that Smoky Face had ever encountered in spirit and flesh, in horses and rider, and he felt suddenly heady with excitement. For two years he and Smoky Face had run away with every purse that had been offered in the country, and it had been "pie for them," as he had told himself.

Now they met something better.

The boy felt the ghost of old Red Fire in the wind, saw his courage and power in the proud brood that stepped so softly about in the sunshine, though he had never heard of him. Blood will tell to the last drop, and it spoke in the horses of Round Stone Valley.

But he turned and looked at the silver king in the stockade and smiled again.

"You or another," he said to Lacey, "one horse or all. I'll take on the bunch for a thousand a heat."

The blood flamed into John Caloran's face. It was not the mention of the stakes—that was easy enough for him. It was the manner of this stranger, the certainty, the high-handed confidence, that roused his swift and heavy temper.

He leaned on the corral gate and narrowed his handsome eyes.

"You seem pretty sure, young feller," he said.

"Am," said Bobbie briefly.

"An' you resk a thousand a heat. 'Tain't enough."

"Two," said Bobbie, doing some rapid calculating.

The rancher shook his head. He did not turn his eyes, but he could feel the presence of Smoky Face behind him—and he felt as he had felt that long past day when Red Fire stamped where he stood—a wild feeling of desire that shook him to his foundations.

"Nope," he said.

"Huh!" said Bobbie, "I know that to be a high stake for this country. I'm offering you long odds, you understand, when I take on your field, singly or in a bunch. You're due to make some money if your horses are what you bragged them to be from here to the edge of the Willasannas. I've heard about them there."

That hit John Caloran hard and his face flamed darker yet. He struck his doubled fist on the bar beside him.

"All right," he said, "if you're so damned sure—put up your horse. I don't want any more money than I have."

At that the stranger stepped back and flung up his head with an angry gesture.

"Done!" he cried, "*against every horse you've got!* Ask for life-blood, will you?"

But here Lacey Caloran thrust her adorable face, flaming like her dad's, close to Bobbie's pale one.

"Say!" she said tensely, with flaunting insolence, "you're too darned modest! Why don't you ask for me?"

The boy looked into her eyes, deep and fiery and beautiful, and his own took on an added shade of excitement.

"I will," he said, "when I've won the rest."

"Hell!" she said, and whirled away.

That was on Friday. The next morning John Caloran sent out word to every ranch within riding distance that the Caloran horses would race on Wednesday. He knew his colts, and he knew Redbird and he knew big red Spirtle. He glanced down over the spreading valley and pictured a white horse among the colours—a white horse that grazed peacefully on his range—and closed the fingers sprawling on his knee.

He was a sport to his finger tips.

He would have the silver stallion or lose them all—but he did not believe he could lose, not possibly.

After the swift and heated session at the corral gate there was no further reference made to the forthcoming race.

Bobbie Burt went to the ranch house along with all the riders, breeds and hangers-on that partook of John Caloran's largess, and washed at the trough on the shady porch. It was sundown, and the long shadows were sliding far across Round Stone Valley from the mountains on the west.

From the cabins far down towards the foot thin, distant spirals of pale smoke ascended straight and beautiful against the haze of purple and blue.

He ate in the big dining-room with its long tables, and Lacey tended him, laughing

and quick, as if the incident of the stakes were forgotten.

When the night work was done and the men forgathered in the beaten yard under the locust trees, the girl came freely out among them and listened to the talk.

Bobbie, sitting a bit apart with his back against a post, lifted a slim hand and beckoned to her with a boyish secrecy. She came promptly over and sat down beside him, cupping her chin in her hands.

"I hope you haven't lost those stakes?" he asked anxiously.

For answer she jingled her pocket where the "four-bit-piece" clinked on the button.

"Wonder if you're the good sport your father is?" he asked, grinning.

"I'm his daughter," she said.

"Want to hold some more stakes?"

"You bet."

"Here, then."

The boy held up his hand and showed a ring, quaintly carved by hand, holding in its squat claws a shining crimson stone. She did not know that it was a ruby and flawless, but she did know that it was alluringly beautiful. So have men dangled jewels before the eyes of women since the first lapidary worked.

"This," he said, "against—a kiss. Will you hold it?"

For a moment she did not move, looking at the gem. Then she held out her hand.

"Sure," she said, "ain't no Caloran yet ever gone back on his word—or his horses. Gimme it."

¶

NOW this lean young rider of the free range had fought shy of women all his life. Not that he didn't admire them—it wasn't that. But for all the years of his young manhood there had been a grim spectre looming like a shadow on the horizon—the shade of King Tubercle. That had set him apart until the wonderful day when he had seen Smoky Face for the first time—Smoky Face, the free, sentinelling his band at dawn.

At that sight life and determination had flared up in him, and he had decided to live that he might some day mount the king.

How he had accomplished that, how he had lived for months in the Willasanna Hills, subsisting on straight beef, and a lot of it raw, is another story.

It had done the trick of making him a man, of banishing for ever the beckoning spectre, and that is sufficient.

And now, strong and healthy, quiet and poised, free and victorious in his untrammelled existence, he met Lacey Caloran, the imperious idol of all the Round Stone country. He had never seen her like. Indeed, there was no duplicate for this spirited daughter of the wilderness in her beauty and her pride, her daring and her man-like freedom.

Was it a wonder that the boy lay awake that night in some deep room of the ranch house and thought of her, looking at the familiar stars that wheeled above the open window? He pictured the fire in her eyes, the look of the heavy dark hair banded above, the half-insolent curve of her full red lips. He thought of the stakes she held—and of the greater stakes that hung upon the race.

Smoky Face. He had set his friend, the one thing he loved as he loved his life, against the chance of loss, against John Caloran's whole field of runners.

Had he overstepped? Had he, in his pride and his confidence, nettled by Lacey's flaming face, set too heavy odds against the king? Had he asked too much of Smoky Face?

A cold sweat broke out on him, and he clenched his hands until the knuckles stood out white. Panic gripped him, and he rolled out of the hard, clean bed, to dress and go out to the corral where Smoky Face stood like a ghost in the starlight looking down the valley.

The stallion came and rubbed his velvet nose against his breast—a none too gentle proceeding—and some of the nameless fear went out of Bobbie's heart. He touched the great neck, hard as iron beneath the shadowy cloud of mane, and thought of the day two years before when the wild king had pitted his skill and his speed and his endurance against all the men and horses of the Bar Q ranch.

That awful race had been in the heat of August, they had kept him from water, and it had lasted twenty-four hours. . . .

Bobbie swallowed and shook his head and smiled, while he ran a loving hand down along the shining shoulder.

"One or all, old boy," he whispered to the silver horse, "man-rider, girl-rider, or the devil himself—what do we care for all the Caloran bunch? We'll run away from the lot."

Sunday at the ranch was a gala day. Miners came in from the folds of the hills, cowboys, Indians, breeds, a motley lot gathered in the great yard and played for stakes that would have made a city man gape. Out of the dirty buckskin bags there came virgin gold in literal handfuls. They spread a blanket on the grass and played straight through from early morning until dark, when they lighted lanterns and played on in the night. But there were many who did not play, or who dropped out—perforce—and where these forgathered in little knots the one topic of conversation was the coming race. All day long the bars of the stockade where Smoky Face stood held a line of admirers and speculators.

Many a hard month's work in tunnel and drift, in prospect hole on the lonely slopes and on the river bars, was wagered on the outcome.

Back and forth these men who knew horses went from the stockade to the big corral where the red horses played, and it was a significant fact that the odds were almost even.

When this came to John Caloran's ears he flushed with anger.

"One horse against my brood?" he asked coldly, "you're a lot o' fools!"

Love-Wrack

OH Love! The happy-sad event in countless lives,
So strangely bitter-sweet—
Yet without which no soul is quite complete.

With some, ere they have realized your worth,
You pass along your way;
Oft-times with others to the end you stay.

Though strange uncertain torments you may bring,
We treasure you so much,
And pity those who have not felt your touch.

G. W. McMULLEN.

From Sunday until Wednesday was a short time to those who had tramped from fifteen to thirty miles to get there, and most of the crowd stayed over.

Others gathered in as the news went down to the ranches, and by the morning of the day set for the races Caloran's ranch looked like a Fourth of July celebration. Wallulah and two other squaws came up from the camp to help with the cooking. The brown babies toddled about among the men, familiar as puppies.

Lacey was everywhere—as efficient in the kitchen as in the corrals—and Bobbie Burt watched her with a growing excitement.

"Think I'll go out an' gentle up that white horse," she told him once as she passed him among a bunch of men; "I'll want to ride him a lot this summer, an' he's got to learn me."

The boy smiled, while a shout went up at his expense.

"Go to it," he said, "no one but my wife'll ever back him—so begin."

The girl blushed and tossed her black head.

"Don't be too sure," she said, but the stranger had scored, and she went on amid a gale of laughter.

"John," said Dick Murtree gravely, "you goin' to let Lacey ride these races for certain?"

John Caloran looked him square in the eyes.

"Didn't I tell you onct," he replied, "that my girl an' my horses was th' best in the country, an' I'd take a chance on 'em?"

"An' barrin' trouble, dad," said Lacey, with a hand on his shoulder, "they won't fail you, none o' 'em."

Only old John Caloran himself knew how his heart leaped at that. His horses and his daughter—his daughter and his horses.

Even he did not know in what order he thought of them, which came first in his subconscious mind.

But you who read know.

Wednesday morning was as perfect a thing in weather as a mountain spring can turn out, bright, soft, sweet, with winey airs drifting by as soft as a baby's breath, and the sunlight tempered slightly by the eternal haze on such a land.

By nine o'clock all was in readiness. One hundred and seven persons, ranging from the millionaire-owner of the Black Bear mine to the Chink cook from the Fair-

play, gathered out along the open flat where the broad trail, level as a man's palm, went straight down the valley.

John Caloran, Dick Murtree, Tom Cochran, and half a dozen horse wranglers, stood in a little group aside arranging with Bobbie Burt the last small details. Much was left, in a fine courtesy, for the latter to settle, since he was going against what the rancher believed to be certain failure.

One horse against his string?

Six of them if he chose to start old Roanoke, five if he left her out?

It was preposterous—and he had taken the stranger at his word and set them thus:

Smoky Face against Spirtle and High Light;

Smoky Face against Redbird;

Smoky Face against Flutter Flame; and

Smoky Face against Blue Fire—the wildest, fleetest, freest of the lot, a ramping, headstrong replica of old Red Fire in the flesh.

They should all carry the same weight, and Bobbie stuck for this.

They should start at a shot and carry away the white rag on a thin string stretched across the course a mile below.

The stakes should be called aloud from the big gate before the race began, so there could be no hard feelings afterwards.

At that Lacey Caloran looked swiftly across at Bobbie and her face flamed.

Very slightly the boy shook his head and smiled.

There was one stake that should not be called—two, if one counted the four-bit-piece and the button clinking in her pocket.

And then they went for the horses.

Bobbie Burt, stripped of every ounce of weight that he could spare, shoeless, bare-headed, even his silver-studded belt and riding-cuffs cast off, lifted his saddle on Smoky Face, and whistled as he worked.

Like a prince, like a king, the huge horse stood, matchless, flawless, too perfect, it seemed, to be true. His great breast, deep and muscled, spelt power incarnate. His lungs were deep also, a vast bellows, slow-heaving and controlled. His hips were high, so were his withers.

When he stepped, this wild white stallion whom none had ever touched except his master, his whole big body gave and swayed in unison without a jar. Bobbie led him out through the open gate, and a murmur of admiration went up from the beholders when they noted that action, that seeming of power.

And out from the big corral the Caloran horses were coming, beautiful shining reds and roans, gleaming like gold in the sun.

Lacey was among them, leading Blue Fire—young Blue Fire, who, if there was a shade in her passionate adoration of them all, she loved the best.

A wide space was set aside for the start, and a plain line had been drawn across the broad trail.

Here the three horses, Spirtle, High Light, and Smoky Face, stood at last, and a splendid sight they were. Lacey was up on Spirtle, while Tom Cochran rode High Light. A ranch owner from farther back in the mountains held the starting gun. Gentlemen all were these beautiful creatures, and there was none of the fret and false work of starting that so often mars a race in more ordered places. They stood and waited, tossing a head, champing a bit. John Caloran, his eagle eyes sure of everything, raised a hand, and the shot rang out. With one concerted leap they were away, all three pairs of shoulders lifting in unison, all hips dropping in the start.

With the first twenty yards Bobbie Burt knew he had met good blood, and Smoky Face knew it. These were no cow ponies such as had chased him on the Willasanna plains. These were horses like himself, strong-muscled, strong-hearted, built for speed and endurance. They ran powerfully and with ease. But Smoky Face ran powerfully and with consummate ease.

Abreast they thundered down the quarter—the half—the third quarter.

Lacey rode like an Indian exactly, loosely, yet clingingly, for all the world like a burr sticking high on the huge withers of Spirtle. In the last stretch she leaned a trifle forward and urged the red stallion. He responded and surged two feet ahead. Bobbie Burt did not move a muscle, but Smoky Face stretched his white hoofs a bit wider in their devouring stride and closed it up. High Light lost those two feet and never regained them.

Very swiftly and easily the red horse and the white finished this first heat—and they carried the white rag between them, exactly level.

As they turned and trotted back the girl turned a glowing face to Bobbie.

"He's a goer," she said admiringly,

" an' no mistake, but he had all he could do this time. Wait for Redbird—an' Flutter Flame—*an'* Blue Fire ! "

" All right," said the boy, " we'll wait." But he knew that the silver king had never made an effort, that he had run with High Light and Spirtle just for fun. John Caloran was excited. He licked his lips and shouldered through to look keenly at Smoky Face, whose deep lungs did not even heave unduly.

What was a run of a mile to Smoky Face, the king ?

He had run twenty in a stretch before.

He stood and chewed his bit and watched the gathering about him, and Bobbie Burt sat in his saddle and stroked the satin neck under the vanity of dusky mane.

" Bring on the next," said the boy insolently, " we're ready."

Redbird came, older than either Spirtle or High Light, but swifter than both—came stepping out with Lacey in the saddle. The girl's eyes shone, and she cast a resentful glance at the silver horse.

¶

LOW-LYING, lean and graceful, his handsome head level with his back, Redbird ran like the wind. Always he had beated everything on the ranch but the young twins. They alone had left him. They stood out apart. This white stranger ? Why, old Redbird was going to run away from him in a minute !

Therefore he flattened his belly to earth and ran for dear life. But the stranger was there beside him. A little faster. Still the stranger was there. Lacey was lying along his neck now, coaxing him in her golden voice. The old runner was near akin to Red Fire, and he had vast resources, deep lying stores of energy. He called upon them royally, and Bobbie Burt felt Smoky Face tense his body in every muscle, felt the note of his running tune up like that of a fine instrument.

The wind cut by them in a whine, stung the tears into their eyes.

" Whoop ! Whoop ! Whoop ! " yelled the crowd as the horses thundered down the track—abreast. As they passed the second quarter and swung away in the third Redbird, not in response to Lacey's urging but for his own desire, redoubled his efforts. Bobbie felt his heart come up with admiration for him, and he knew that Smoky Face was running—*running*.

Ears back, manes flat along their outstretched necks, the two splendid creatures went down like the wind.

As the fluttering white rag came out of the distance old Redbird called up the last ounce of speed there was in him—and Bobbie Burt closed his eyes and rode. He had a wild thought of wonder at the girl sticking on that flying red streak. Then he looked, for they were whistling down the stretch. Neck and neck, the white horse and the red ! Not an inch between them ! They ran as one—as a single bolt hurtling through space.

And together they flashed by with the goal between them !

Lacey's face was white when they came back. So was John Caloran's. Both pairs of Caloran lips were tight shut.

Redbird was wet from head to heel. Smoky Face was dry.

John Caloran went to Lacey and spoke in low tones, and the girl shook her head. Swift hands were taking off her saddle, while someone came leading Flutter Flame. Ah ! There was beauty indeed. Youth and fire and slenderness.

" You want to rest your horse a bit ? " asked Dick Murtree, but Bobbie, drunk with excitement, shook his head. He thought of the Willasannas and that August day—and Smoky Face. Yet he knew that the note of speed was rising with every horse they set against him.

When Lacey, looking like an Indian princess on the beautiful red-roan colt, came up beside him there was no colour in her cheeks and a deep anger smouldered in her eyes.

" You'd better prod him up this time," she said, " he's runnin' fer his life. I'll hitch him to a plough this fall."

The smile left Bobbie's lips. His blue eyes met hers and contracted.

" Yes ? " he said. " Now, on the contrary, I seem to see the Calorans borrowing some mangy mustangs from the Diggers to turn that little trick."

" Fool ! " cried the girl sharply.

A horrible fear was in her and her heart was getting sick. She, like her dad, knew horseflesh. She looked around at their own beautiful horses with dilated eyes.

Then she snatched her rein and nodded to the starter.

Young Flutter Flame came trembling to the scratch. He had never run in such a

setting and his nerves were tightly strung. From back of the crowd there came a sudden ringing peal, a loud, imperious challenge from Blue Fire, stamping on the turf. The other horses took it up and squealed in unison. It was as if in Blue Fire the whole fine brood came to a point, as if the crux of the matter lay in him.

"Ready!" cried Lacey, watching the starter.

Lacey talked to the colt, smoothed his neck, and coaxed him.

Then the gun cracked, and young Flutter Flame sprang away straight down the track. At first he flung up his pretty head and ran in a panic, but the girl in the saddle pulled him sharply out of that and in three leaps he was down to business.

If Redbird had run with courage and power and sanity, this young thing went like a buck affrighted. Youth was there and strength in every tempered muscle, and hereditary speed.

Bobbie Burt caught himself laughing insanely. There was a lump in his throat. He thought of the four-bit-piece in Lacey's pocket, the button and the ring. He marvelled at the awful pace. Never in all his life had he ridden as he rode now. Those races below when he stripped the money from the punchers and the Indians. They were child's play! And he had never known that Smoky Face could run like this!

Why, he felt himself shaking in the saddle to the roll of the stallion's hoofs. Was it a girl that lay almost flat on the thing beside him?

Should he press the king to hurry?

A fear, a horror, was clutching him.

No—he would not touch him.

He could not see for the mist in his eyes, but he knew suddenly that the white rag was almost upon them—when it should have been a whole stretch away! Had they made it in half the time? And then Lacey screamed—screamed like an Indian, in sheer anguish, and he felt Smoky Face shoot forward, even as the winged thing beside him shot forward at the exciting sound.

"By ——!" shouted a judge on the raised platform. "The third time! Th' third time, or I'm damned!"

For the third time the red nose and the white had carried away the string with the white rag.

When Lacey Caloran could get Flutter Flame in hand, far down the valley at last, and followed Bobbie back to the yelling crowd at the starting-line, she was whimpering like a child and swearing with every breath.

"It's witch-work, dad!" she cried, "there's something wrong!"

Her face was white as milk and her eyes like black pools full of hatred for the white horse and his rider.

"Three draws!" said one of the crowd, "does look funny."

"Bring on Blue Fire! Bring him!" screamed Lacey, "I'll show these damned outsiders!"

Bobbie Burt, panting and pale himself, put a wondering hand on Smoky Face's shoulder where the sweat was just beginning to start.

"Hard as steel," he whispered to himself. "Oh, Smoky Face, old pal!"

The great bellows that passed for lungs beneath the shining sides were lifting and falling regularly with long, revivifying draughts. The boy called for water and a sponge and wiped out the stallion's mouth, wiped the dusky face.

There was a vast hubbub among the betters, a chorus of those at sea.

What was the matter with things? Why did not one horse or another win something? Could the white stranger do any more than hold the red horses level, or was he being held in? Was it possible for one horse to run all these killing heats and still be fit—still have a chance?

For answer Bobbie Burt looked to his saddle, eased the headstall, and mounted lightly. He sat and waited. John Caloran, the colour gone from his face so that it was sickly ashen, led up Blue Fire. The colt was nervous and in an ugly mood. He stamped and squatted, shook his head and winced at the cinches. Once he laid back his ears and stretched out his neck towards Smoky Face with his teeth bared. He was reckless and wild—that same strain that ran in Lacey Caloran was making him hard to manage, the bounding abandon of too much vitality, the living fire of youth unchecked.

This was the last heat. Everything depended on Blue Fire.

¶

BEFORE Tom Cochran had finished with the last latigo she was in the saddle, had snatched up the rein. But young Blue Fire flung himself sidewise and went lunging

down the track, stiff-legged, his head shaking from side to side. Lacey, a bit excited and filled with heavy anger, brought him down with no gentle hand. She tried to turn him, but the colt went lunging on, though she pulled his head to his shoulder. The starter waited. The watching lines grew quiet. Bobbie Burt sat on Smoky Face at the line.

But something was wrong with Blue Fire. Nostrils blowing, dark eyes rolling, he jumped and capered farther and farther away. A few of the men began to follow, but the starter called them back.

Fifty yards away the colt suddenly rose high in the air with a perfect corkscrew motion. John Caloran let out an oath.

"Blood will tell!" he muttered, "that's his wild sire showin' for th' first time. What th'—— God!"

As the leaping colt twisted at the zenith his rider swayed oddly. The next moment the horrified watchers saw her slide down along his flank as the saddle turned on his slim, stretched body. Tragedy happens in a second. It was scarce the space of a breath before Blue Fire was off down the trampled track with a whirl of blue and black bounding at his side.

The girl was dragging, caught in the trappings.

At that awful sight John Caloran knew—knew in one agonized second—which he loved best, his daughter or his horses.

"A gun!" he shrieked hoarsely, "gimme a rifle!"

But there was none at hand.

Then this old patriarch of Round Stone Valley raised his huge fists and brought them down upon his breast like flails upon a drum.

"Save her!" he cried; "I'll give my land an' all upon it to th' man that saves my girl!"

But there were few to hear, for the crowd was falling back before the sudden charge of a silver bolt that launched itself down along the track.

Smoky Face, the king, was running.

Low upon his neck his master lay and beat an open hand on his shoulder.

Far down ahead the little dark figure that had flailed a leap or two at Blue Fire's heels was doing a marvellous thing—it was crawling up itself—up the half-turned saddle! One hand was in the cinch—the other reaching—reaching for the flowing red mane ahead.

Bobbie saw it grasp a strand—slip loose—grasp again—and hold.

Like a burr again he saw her—John Caloran's daughter in every inch—stick to a flying horse. But this was something different, deadly different. This was the pick of Round Stone Valley, this young Blue Fire, wild and uncertain, the fastest, strongest of the lot, and he was gone wild with fear, with excitement and with some nameless thing that spurned all training, all restraint. And he was far, far in the lead.

Bobbie's heart turned sick within him, his head whirled with horror.

And then he lifted his bare heels into Smoky Face's flanks and whimpered out his first command.

"Run!" he cried. "Run—run—old pal! For God's sake—*run!*"

Who can say how much the dumb ones hear and understand?

It may have been the note in his master's voice, hoarse and terrible, it may have been the flattening of his body along his back.

But Smoky Face, the king of all the Willasannas for many years, lay down to earth with the word.

He stretched his great body out in a silver line. His beautiful head went forward like a point. His white hoofs made a shining blur beneath him.

Run?

There had never been a horse in all his world that could run with him when he willed it so. Now his master called. As if he made one challenge to the world, the silver king called up his vast reserves.

Faster he went and faster. The wind sang like a wire. There were no landmarks. Bobbie Burt closed his eyes to narrow slits through which he watched that wild red rocket ahead. There was blood on his lips where his teeth set. In the space of a few heart beats it seemed he saw the white rag—how puny a thing!—fly from Blue Fire's onslaught, and in another moment he passed the raised platform where the judges were helplessly staring. Down beyond the last of the spectators—out along the valley—he and Smoky Face, Blue Fire and Lacey—laughing Lacey of the happy heart!—played out their tragedy to the lonely hills.

Bobbie Burt knew that a long forgotten prayer of childhood came into his mind, that if he did not overtake John Caloran's best, the world and all it held would be for

ever stale. So he pressed his knees tighter to the stallion's sides and rode as he had never ridden. But Smoky Face did not need an urge. His great speed was increasing steadily, with that familiar rising note as of an engine tuning up.

Faster!

Bobbie could see the distance closing up between him and that flying thing ahead.

Faster still!

He saw Lacey's white face flung around his way.

Faster—faster—faster! He felt a deadly nausea, as on a rocking boat at sea. He was conscious of a pride and joy in the wonderful horse beneath him that choked him. And then deliberately he saw Smoky Face draw up on Blue Fire, who was doing every bit there was in him.

He saw the dusky nose reach the flowing red tail—the hips—he leaned far out and reached a desperate hand. Steadily he gained. The thunder of hoofs was like the sticks of the ancient gods beating on the drum of the valley. He saw Lacey's black eyes across Blue Fire's back—awful, beseeching. . . .

Then his hand was at the bit—had grasped it.

Together the red horse and the white went on—a wee bit slower—a wee bit more.

"Steady — steady — steady — steady!" he was calling to Smoky Face.

It took eternity, it seemed to him, for the great engine of bone and muscle to run down that unspeakable momentum, but he knew that, obedient and wise, the king was slowing. . . .

Far down by the willows where the Little River curved and sparkled in the sun at last they slowed—and stopped.

Blue Fire was done. He stood with hanging head and trembling limbs—but he had made a great race—a great race! He was the pick of Round Stone Valley, indeed.

And Bobbie Burt, his heart near bursting, leaped forward and took into his arms the little figure clinging so gamely to her grasp of cinch and mane.

With shaking hands he loosed the deadly strap that had become caught around her knee when the saddle turned.

As she sank weakly against him Lacey Caloran looked up with sombre eyes.

"He's th'—best in th' world," she said, "an' you win—standin'. You can have—th' pick—o' Caloran's—ranch—an' here's th' stakes."

She put an uncertain hand towards the breast pocket of the blue shirt, where the four-bit-piece clinked on the button.

But Bobbie Burt laughed tremulously and folded her tight to his heart. With unwonted daring he kissed her straight on her pallid lips.

"I'll hold you to that," he said.

Far back they could see a bunch of riders coming like the wind. In the lead rode John Caloran, bareheaded, his white hair blowing back from his whiter face.

As he thundered up and flung off, his lips were working.

"Is—she—she——" he croaked.

Lacey herself stood up to face him.

"I guess we failed you, dad—th' colts an' me," she said pathetically; but her father took her in his arms for the first time since she could remember. Over her shoulder he held out a hand to Bobbie Burt.

"Th' ranch an' all upon it belongs to you, young man," he said grimly. "Close when you're ready."

But Bobbie shook his head.

"We—we only want one thing," he said, "Smoky Face and I."

"Name it," said John Caloran.

"Name it, Lacey," said the boy.

"Me," said Lacey.

"*What?*"

"I—I promised him th' pick o' th' ranch, myself. Don't the Calorans keep their word?"

For a moment the old patriarch stood in silence.

Then he smiled, and the smile was very like Lacey's own when she would have disarmed a preacher.

"I guess that's right," he said; "I need a grown son anyway—an' we'll see white horses among our reds some day. Come—let's go back to the house."

"Say," said the girl, "I guess I win that four-bit-piece after all, don't I?"

"You do," said Bobbie promptly.

As he walked over to put a loving hand on Smoky Face's shoulder he looked into his friend's dark eyes.

"Never again, old pal," he whispered; "there's nothing left to win. We've cornered the world in Round Stone Valley."

The Man and The Snake

Is bravery, then, no more than pride?

By AMBROSE BIERCE

Among examples of the American short story the work of Ambrose Bierce ranks high. If it is not as well known as that of some of his fellow countrymen, it is none the less worthy of attention. There is "something different" about a Bierce story. The author mysteriously vanished just before the war and has not since been heard of.

"It is of veritabyll report, and attested of so many that there be nowe of wyse and learned none to gaynsaye it, that ye serpente hys eye hath a magnetick propertie that whosoe falleth into its svasion is drawn forwards in despyte of his wille, and perisheth miserabyll by ye creature hys byte."

STRETCHED at ease upon a sofa, in gown and slippers, Harker Brayton smiled as he read the foregoing sentence in old Morryster's "Marvells of Science." "The only marvel in the matter," he said to himself, "is that the wise and learned in Morryster's day should have believed such nonsense as is rejected by most even of the ignorant in ours."

A train of reflections followed—for Brayton was a man of thought—and he unconsciously lowered his book without altering the direction of his eyes. As soon as the volume had gone below the line of sight, something in an obscure corner of the room recalled his attention to his surroundings. What he saw, in the shadow under his bed, were two small points of light, apparently about an inch apart. They might have been reflections of the gas jet above him, in metal nail heads; he gave them but little thought and resumed his reading. A moment later something—some impulse which it did not occur to him to analyse—impelled him to lower the book again and seek for what he saw before. The points of light were still there. They seemed to have become brighter than before, shining with a greenish lustre which he had not at first observed. He thought, too, that they might have moved a trifle—were somewhat nearer. They were still too much in shadow, however, to reveal their nature and origin to an indolent attention, and he resumed his reading. Suddenly something in the text suggested a thought which made him start and drop the book for the third time to the side of the sofa, whence, escaping from his hand, it fell sprawling to the floor, back upward. Brayton, half risen, was staring intently into the obscurity beneath the bed, where the points of light shone with, it seemed to him, an added fire.

His attention was now fully aroused, his gaze eager and imperative. It disclosed, almost directly beneath the foot-rail of the bed, the coils of a large serpent—the points of light were its eyes! Its horrible head, thrust flatly forth from the innermost coil and resting upon the outermost, was directed straight toward him, the definition of the wide, brutal jaw and the idiot-like forehead serving to show the direction of its malevolent gaze. The eyes were no longer merely luminous points; they looked into his own with a meaning, a malign significance.

II

A SNAKE in a bedroom of a modern city dwelling of the better sort is, happily, not so common a phenomenon as to make explanation altogether needless. Harker Brayton, a bachelor of thirty-five, a scholar, idler, and something of an athlete, rich, popular, and of sound health, had returned to San Francisco from all manner of remote and unfamiliar countries. His tastes, always a trifle luxurious, had taken on an added exuberance from long privation; and the resources even of the Castle Hotel being inadequate to their perfect gratification, he had gladly accepted the hospitality of his friend, Dr. Druring, the distinguished scientist. Dr. Druring's house, a large, old-fashioned one in what was now an obscure quarter of the city, had an outer and visible

aspect of proud reserve. It plainly would not associate with the contiguous elements of its altered environment, and appeared to have developed some of the eccentricities which come of isolation. One of these was a " wing " conspicuously irrelevant in point of architecture, and no less rebellious in the matter of purpose ; for it was a combination of laboratory, menagerie, and museum.

It was here the doctor indulged the scientific side of his nature in the study of such forms of animal life as engaged his interest and comforted his taste—which, it must be confessed, ran rather to the lower forms. For one of the higher types nimbly and sweetly to recommend itself unto his gentle senses, it had at least to retain certain rudimentary characteristics allying it to such " dragons of the prime " as toads and snakes. His scientific sympathies were distinctly reptilian ; he loved nature's vulgarians and described himself as the Zola of zoology.

His wife and daughters, not having the advantage to share his enlightened curiosity regarding the works and ways of our ill-starred fellow-creatures, were, with needless austerity, excluded from what he called the Snakery, and doomed to companionship with their own kind, though, to soften the rigours of their lot, he had permitted them, out of his great wealth, to outdo the reptiles in the gorgeousness of their surroundings and to shine with a superior splendour.

Architecturally, and in point of " furnishing," the Snakery had a severe simplicity befitting the humble circumstances of its occupants, many of whom, indeed, could not safely have been entrusted with the liberty which is necessary to the full enjoyment of luxury, for they had the troublesome peculiarity of being alive. In their own apartments, however, they were under as little personal restraint as was compatible with their protection from the baneful habit of swallowing one another ; and, as Brayton had thoughtfully been apprised, it was more than a tradition that some of them had at divers times been found in parts of the premises where it would perhaps have embarrassed them to explain their presence.

Despite the Snakery and its uncanny associations—to which, indeed, he gave little attention—Brayton found life at the Druring mansion very much to his mind.

III

BEYOND a smart shock of surprise and a shudder of mere loathing, Mr. Brayton was not greatly affected. His first thought was to ring the call-bell and bring a servant ; but, although the bell-cord dangled within easy reach, he made no movement toward it ; it had occurred to his mind that the act might subject him to the suspicion of fear, which he certainly did not feel. He was more keenly conscious of the incongruous nature of the situation than affected by its perils ; it was revolting, but absurd.

The reptile was of a species with which Brayton was unfamiliar. Its length he could only conjecture ; the body at the largest visible part seemed about as thick as his forearm. In what way was it dangerous, if in any way ? Was it venomous ? Was it a constrictor ? His knowledge of nature's danger signals did not enable him to say ; he had never deciphered the code.

If not dangerous, the creature was at least offensive. It was *de trop*—" matter out of place "—an impertinence. The gem was unworthy of the setting. Even the barbarous taste of our time and country, which had loaded the walls of the room with pictures, the floor with furniture, and the furniture with bric-à-brac, had not quite fitted the place for this bit of the savage life of the jungle. Besides—insupportable thought !—the exhalations of its breath mingled with the atmosphere which he himself was breathing !

These thoughts shaped themselves with greater or less definition in Brayton's mind, and begot action. The process is what we call consideration and decision. It is thus that we are wise and unwise. It is thus that the withered leaf in an autumn breeze shows greater or less intelligence than its fellows, falling upon the land or upon the lake. The secret of human action is an open one ; something contracts our muscles. Does it matter if we give to the preparatory molecular changes the name of will ?

Brayton rose to his feet and prepared to back softly away from the snake, without disturbing it, if possible, and through the door. People retire so from the presence of the great, for greatness is power, and power is a menace. He knew that he could walk backward without obstruction, and find the door without error. Should the monster follow, the taste which had plastered the walls with paintings had consistently sup-

plied a rack of murderous Oriental weapons from which he could snatch one to suit the occasion. In the meantime the snake's eyes burned with a more pitiless malevolence than ever.

Brayton lifted his right foot free of the floor to step backward. That moment he felt a strong aversion to doing so.

"I am accounted brave," he murmured; "is bravery, then, no more than pride? Because there are none to witness the shame shall I retreat?"

He was steadying himself with his right hand upon the back of a chair, his foot suspended.

"Nonsense!" he said aloud; "I am not so great a coward as to fear to seem to myself afraid."

He lifted the foot a little higher by slightly bending the knee, and thrust it sharply to the floor—an inch in front of the other! He could not think how that occurred. A trial with the left foot had the same result; it was again in advance of the right. The hand upon the chair-back was grasping it; the arm was straight, reaching somewhat backward. One might have seen that he was reluctant to lose his hold. The snake's malignant head was still thrust forth from the inner coil as before, the neck level. It had not moved, but its eyes were now electric sparks, radiating an infinity of luminous needles.

The man had an ashy pallor. Again he took a step forward, and another, partly dragging the chair, which, when finally released, fell upon the floor with a crash. The man groaned; the snake made neither sound nor motion, but its eyes were two dazzling suns. The reptile itself was wholly concealed by them. They gave off enlarging rings of rich and vivid colours, which at their greatest expansion successively vanished like soap bubbles; they seemed to approach his very face, and anon were an immeasurable distance away. He heard, somewhere, the continuous throbbing of a great drum, with desultory bursts of far music, inconceivably sweet, like the tones of an æolian harp. He knew it for the sunrise melody of Memnon's statue, and thought he stood in the Nileside reeds, hearing, with exalted sense, that immortal anthem through the silence of the centuries.

The music ceased; rather, it became by sensible degrees the distant roll of a retreating thunderstorm. A landscape, glittering with sun and rain, stretched before him, arched with a vivid rainbow, framing in its giant curve a hundred visible cities. In the middle distance a vast serpent, wearing a crown, reared its head out of its voluminous convolutions and looked at him with his dead mother's eyes. Suddenly this enchanting landscape seemed to rise swiftly upward, like the drop-scene at a theatre, and vanished in a blank. Something struck him a hard blow upon the face and breast. He had fallen to the floor; the blood ran from his broken nose and his bruised lips. For a moment he was dazed and stunned, and lay with closed eyes, his face against the floor. In a few moments he had recovered, and then realized that his fall, by withdrawing his eyes, had broken the spell which held him. He felt that now, by keeping his gaze averted, he would be able to retreat. But the thought of the serpent within a few feet of his head, yet unseen—perhaps in the very act of springing upon him and throwing its coils about his throat—was too horrible. He lifted his head, stared again into those baleful eyes, and was again in bondage.

The snake had not moved, and appeared somewhat to have lost its power upon the imagination; the gorgeous illusions of a few moments before were not repeated. Beneath that flat and brainless brow its black, beady eyes simply glittered, as at first, with an expression unspeakably malignant. It was as if the creature, knowing its triumph assured, had determined to practise no more alluring wiles.

Now ensued a fearful scene. The man, prone upon the floor, within a yard of his enemy, raised the upper part of his body upon his elbows, his head thrown back, his legs extended to their full length. His face was white between its gouts of blood; his eyes were strained open to their uttermost expansion. There was froth upon his lips; it dropped off in flakes. Strong convulsions ran through his body, making almost serpentine undulations. He bent himself at the waist, shifting his legs from side to side. And every movement left him a little nearer to the snake. He thrust his hands forward to brace himself back, yet constantly advanced upon his elbows.

IV

DR. DRURING and his wife sat in the library. The scientist was in rare good humour.

"I have just obtained, by exchange with another collector," he said, "a splendid specimen of the *ophiophagus*."

"And what may that be?" the lady inquired with a somewhat languid interest.

"Why, bless my soul, what profound ignorance! My dear, a man who ascertains after marriage that his wife does not know Greek, is entitled to a divorce. The *ophiophagus* is a snake which eats other snakes."

"I hope it will eat all yours," she said, absently shifting the lamp. "But how does it get the other snakes? By charming them, I suppose."

"That is just like you, dear," said the doctor, with an affection of petulance. "You know how irritating to me is any illusion to that vulgar superstition about the snake's power of fascination."

The conversation was interrupted by a mighty cry, which rang through the silent house like the voice of a demon shouting in a tomb! Again and yet again it sounded, with terrible distinctness. They sprang to their feet, the man confused, the lady pale and speechless with fright. Almost before the echoes of the last cry had died away, the doctor was out of the room, springing up the staircase two steps at a time. In the corridor, in front of Brayton's chamber, he met some servants who had come from the upper floor. Together they rushed at the door without knocking. It was unfastened and gave way. Brayton lay upon his stomach on the floor, dead. His head and arms were partly concealed under the foot-rail of the bed. They pulled the body away, turning it upon the back. The face was daubed with blood and froth, the eyes were wide open, staring—a dreadful sight!

"Died in a fit," said the scientist, bending his knee and placing his hand upon the heart. While in that position, he happened to glance under the bed. "Good God!" he added, "how did this thing get in here?"

He reached under the bed, pulled out the snake, and flung it, still coiled, to the centre of the room, whence, with a harsh, shuffling sound, it slid across the polished floor till stopped by the wall, where it lay without motion. It was a stuffed snake; its eyes were two shoe buttons.

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The Enoch of Ballyhoustie

A hypocrite who went back to Babylon

By ANDREW SOUTAR

REFLECTING on the life of profligacy that Tammas Baillie had lived in the Argentine, you may hold that he was incapable of heroics when he returned to Ballyhoustie. It may be your opinion that he left the village for the second and last time because the flesh was too weak to resist the call of the sirens who sit among the coco-palms of Brazil and croon Bacchanalian ditties to sailor-men and world wanderers. Frankly, I cannot tell you where Tammas is to-day; he may be alive and with the sirens aforesaid; he may be stretched on a rice-mat in the shade of a Florida orange grove, spirits and siphon to his elbow, perspiring fan-waggers at his head. He may be—and I fear me this is the case—he may be dead. But be he drunk or sober, dead or alive, I am certain of this: there is *one* white mark to his eternal credit.

This is how the story runs. Sanders McCormick was a crofter, poor, as crofters generally are, but as God-fearing as any of them. McCormick was born in the village, and without any trace of conceit in his voice he could take you back over four or five generations of McCormicks. He would confess that none of them had done "vera weel," adding that the fact was a tribute to their conscience rather than a reproach to their lack of ambition. He was a man of sixty when the trouble of his life came to him. His only daughter, Jean, slipped into the village one night after an absence of five years.

Jean was a handsome woman, with a rare faculty for seeing more stars than most people of her class. From her childhood, she had shown a disposition to climb above the other women in the village—old, white-haired Musselwhite, who loaned out books at a penny per week per volume, used to say that if it wasn't for Jean McCormick, "the reading body," he might as well close his library. Jean became an actress. Only her mother was aware of her intentions. Sanders McCormick learned of her vocation a month after she left his house, ostensibly to take up the position of parlour-maid in Edinburgh. When he learned the terrible truth from his wife's lips, he closed and locked the door, then from the peg on the wall he took down his green-black church coat and rusty, chimney-pot hat with the broad, crape band; he put them all away in a brass-bound box that had belonged to his grandfather, and as he turned the key in the lock of that box, he looked up at his wife and said: "God forgive her!"

She came back, as I have said, in the night time, and she was dressed in clothes the like of which McCormick had never before seen. The furs around her neck were sinful in his eyes; the gold bangle on her wrist was tainted. He put the table between her and himself. His wife, she who had toiled and pined with him for nearly forty years, was standing by her daughter's side, and her dry, crooked fingers were wrestling with each other. McCormick was terrible to look upon. He said to his daughter:

"Ye've come back—what for?"

And his daughter, too great for subterfuge, even if it were needed, told him the truth. Happiness that couldn't be described in words had been followed by tragedy equally unspeakable. A child was coming. This was the autumn; before the following spring had given place to summer——

And Sanders McCormick said between his teeth: "Swineherds and husks for prodigals—my prodigals."

The girl gently placed her mother aside.

"You don't understand, father. Give me leave to explain."

"I don't want to understand," he said. "There's the door."

"I was married two months ago."

"Ye lie."

"And he died a month after he made me his wife."

"Gie me his name."

" Robert Henderson. He was a mining engineer."

" Aye. How long has it taken you to think it out—to commit it to memory ? "

" What, father ? "

" The lie you're telling me now."

" It isn't a lie. We were married secretly, and according to Scottish law," the girl protested.

" By declaration ? Then where are your witnesses ? Who were they ? "

" Both friends of yours, father. You knew them well. Hamish Macdonald and Stewart Lambe. They were at grandfather's funeral, you'll mind."

" I mind it well. They're both dead—killed in the pit accident, five miles from Ballyhoustie, six weeks ago."

" And I know that, too," she said, sobbingly.

" And yet you come to me with this story."

She leaned heavily against her mother.

" Everybody's dead who knew of it," she said in a whisper. " My husband wished the marriage to be kept secret for a few days. Then another service would have followed that which is law in Scotland."

Sanders McCormick laughed dryly.

" It's been a sair killing business," he sneered.

" My husband was compelled to leave me two days after we were married. He went out to central Africa for a company prospecting for uranium. The whole party was lost in the interior. Hostile natives. The secretary of the company sent me word from London, and promised to do all he could for me."

" A likely story. Tell me, did your ' lines ' die at the same time ? Where's the paper, and where's the record ? "

" My husband took the paper with him."

The old woman by the girl's side held out her hands to McCormick.

" Sandy, man, ye're awf'y hard. Why canna ye believe the girl ? "

" Woman, sit ye down. I may be poor, but I'm honest. My father was poor and honest before me. There's nobody can lift a finger against my integrity. What's to be done ? "

" Jean has come here because there was nowhere else to go."

" You believe her story ? "

" There are some things, Sandy, that ye darena disbelieve. This is one."

Jean stayed, and every hour brought with it new fears. She had told the truth, but here was a combination of circumstances that would justify anyone in disbelieving her story, and if her father was sceptical, to whom could she look for sympathy ?

The night after Jean's return, her mother approached the greatest of the girl's fears.

" Jean, woman," she said, in a breaking voice, " I would that you'd never gone away. Only a week ago, Tammas Baillie asked after ye."

" He's come back from the Argentine ? "

" Aye, as rich as rich. He hasn't married, Jean. You mind how he used to say that there was only one woman in the world for him, and that was Jean McCormick ? "

" Don't talk of it now, mother."

" I've been thinking about it all night. Ye broke his heart, Jean, although ye were only a girl at the time."

" I didn't care for him, mother—not in that way."

" He was a fine, steady lad before you threw him over, and your father has it that you ruined his life."

" You said he was rich, mother."

" Aye, but what are riches if your life's been wrang ? Tammas came home from the Argentine with heaps of gold. He's bought a fine house at the top of the village. But, woman, ye can see the life he's been leading when ye look into his face. And he doesn't lie about it, Jean. He said to me, ' I might have been as straight as Sanders McCormick hisself, if Jean had been there to give me a hand when I needed it.' " She wiped her eyes with the hem of her apron. Then, insinuatingly, " He might be saved even yet, Jean. It isn't too late."

The girl cried out in affright.

" You don't mean that, mother ? "

" Ye might repair the ill you did him. And, Jean—this is what I have been thinking about all night—ever since you came home. Tammas Baillie's name would save—*somebody else*—somebody that's coming—from the long tongues of Ballyhoustie."

And thus the mother confessed that she, too, disbelieved.

When Tammas Baillie heard that Jean had returned to the house of her father, he sent telegrams to a dozen roystering friends in Edinburgh, informing them that owing to a slight illness, he wished to postpone the joy-night to which he had invited them. Another telegram cancelled the engagement of a band of pipers, but promised payment all the same. Tammas gloried in a valet, a

little, half-caste fellow whom he had picked up in Monte Video. He summoned the fellow to his room, and for three-quarters of an hour gave himself up to sartorial embellishment. When, at last, he drove down in a yellow phaeton to the cottage of Mr. Sanders McCormick, in his light grey tweed suit and with his shock of tawny hair flattened down with fearsome cosmetics, the villagers, as he put it, " gasped some."

It is not to the discredit of Mrs. Sanders McCormick that she was responsible for Tammas being informed of Jean's return ; and there was something more hearty than the welcome usually given by the poor to the well-to-do in the way in which she received him. In the " but " of the cottage Tammas sat facing Jean, while in the " ben " Mrs. McCormick sat by the window watching anxiously for the return of her husband.

Tammas brushed the years aside with a careless hand, and went back to the days when he had little ambition but a great deal of love. Jean told him that her heart had been buried with the man whom she called husband for only a month, and Tammas said, " Jean, I would rather be the husband, for a month, of a woman like you, than live a hundred years without you. I've made a lot of money, Jean. There's money to be made in the Argentine. Cattle —I made thousands out of cattle. I have thousands now, in the bank. Did ye hear me say that, Jean—in the bank ? Sounds peculiar, doesn't it, from Tammas Baillie, who never saved a penny in his boyhood, nor brought a smile to his mother's face. I wish she were alive now, Jean ! What couldn't I do for her ? "

When Tammas Baillie returned to his house that night, he was a different man, although he had obtained no more from Jean than a gentle whisper, " I'm awfully sorry for you, Tam."

¶

AT the end of a month he was more hopeful. The villagers guessed that something was happening, for the minister, who never minced matters, had dropped Tam out of his prayers of a Sunday. Either Tam was beyond hope, or prayer had been answered. His Godless life was being reformed. The orgies at Tammas Baillie's house at the top of the village ceased ; villagers who lived within a radius of a hundred yards began to show signs of better health, due, so they said, to their ability to sleep a night through without being awakened by the screeching of fiddles, the skirling of pipes, and the shrieks of bedizened women from Edinburgh. Tammas, they said, had taken to going to bed like a Christian, and if it wasn't the minister it must be Jean McCormick—" and a vera guid thing for Sanders McCormick."

When the rumours reached the ears of Sanders McCormick, he strode home with his face red with rage. It was evening. Jean had gone to Kilmarnock to visit a friend of her youth. She was expected back before supper, and that night Tammas Baillie was to bring down a collection of curios for inspection by Jean and her mother. Sanders had been carrying his coat over his shoulder ; his trousers were tied at the knees. He dropped the coat in the porch, and tramped heavily into the " ben." His wife could see what had happened, and when he brought his ponderous fist down on the table, she said only, " Sandy, man, bide wi' me a bit."

" Bide wi' ye ? " he roared. " What's this they're saying in the village ? Have you been encouraging it, woman ? Why did ye no tell me ? Is this the first thing you've kept from me ? "

" Sandy, man——"

" Hould your tongue until I've finished. What's this they're saying ? Tammas Baillie courting the daughter of Sanders McCormick—and a guid thing for Sanders McCormick ! Tell me, woman, have you heard it ? "

" Aye—I've heard it," she said, without seeming to open her lips.

" Do ye think I'll permit it ? "

" Sandy, man, Tammas is no so bad as they paint him. He was on'y a young man when he went to the Argentine, and ye ken weel what young men are. He's a man now, and he's changed. Sandy, it'll mean a deal for Jean."

" For Jean ? " he burst out. " Do ye think it's of Jean I'm thinking. Tammas Baillie may be a profligate—he may have sinned up to his very neck—he may have the blackest heart that ever was put in the body of a man—but, thank God, I'm honest, and I'm not going to have the blood of Tammas Baillie on my head, I tell ye."

" Blood, man ? It's strange words you're saying."

" Do ye think," he roared, " that, bad though Tammas Baillie may have been, I'm going to let him come into this house

and take—take my shame on his shoulders without telling him—without warning him? Do ye understand what I'm saying, woman?"

A footstep was heard on the path outside.

"Here's Tammas coming," she said, and with a sobbing cry of "Jean! Every haun' is agen ye!" she fled from the room.

Tammas Baillie placed a small, wooden chest on the flagstones of the porch, and knocked at the door. Sanders McCormick went to the window.

"You can come in," he said, jerking a thumb in the direction of the door.

Tammas lifted up his box of curios and came into the "ben."

"I didn't expect to find you here, Mr. McCormick," he said.

"No," said Sanders.

"Not that I'm—sorry to meet you here, you understand that?"

"Aye," said Sanders.

"I've been wanting to meet you for some time."

"'Deed?"

"Yes," said Tammas. "I wanted to talk to you, but I was putting it off a bit until I was satisfied that Jean——"

He got no further. Sanders McCormick pointed to the old, horse-hair sofa near the window.

"Sit down, Tammas Baillie," he said. "And there's no need to open that box. I know what's in it. You can take them back when I've done with you."

Tammas nervously fingered his big butterfly tie, and passed a palm over his well-oiled hair.

"I'm sorry you're taking it like this, Mr. McCormick," he said.

"There's no need to 'Mister' me," came the interruption. "My name's Sanders McCormick, and if it's good enough for me, it's good enough for you."

"Oh! it's good enough for me," said Tammas. "But about Jean. You see, I've acted fair and square by you. I didn't mean to say anything to Jean until I had your permission."

"Hould your tongue! I'm thinking."

"Ay, ay," said Tammas, resignedly, and took to playing with the lapel of his coat.

"Is there anything in your life that you're proud of, Tammas Baillie?"

"I don't quite get you, Mr. McCormick."

"Speak in good Scottish, and we'll understand one another better." McCormick was striding up and down in front of the fireplace. "You don't *get* me? What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, I don't quite understand you."

"Have you ever done any good in your life, either to yourself or your fellow men?"

Tammas frowned and seemed to take a fresh hold of himself.

"I've never kept any accounts of that description," he said. "A man who goes through life counting his good deeds never finds time to reckon the bad ones."

McCormick sneered.

"Ah, ye make a bad minister, Tammas Baillie! I asked you a fair question, and ye canna answer it. Is it true what the people say of you, that you've lived a Godless life in foreign parts?"

"That's neither here nor there, Sanders McCormick. What I've done I'm ready to answer for. I've lived a life that may not be in keeping with your views, but I tell you, man, that if ever a body wanted to settle down and make amends—try to repair the damage that he's done, either to his soul or to the memory of his people, it's Tammas Baillie."

"Ay," nodded McCormick, as though he had expected the answer. "And the trying's done by drinking and swilling in your house every night, and dancing with bedizened women, and singing with profligate men. Is that how you're trying?"

"Sanders, man, ye have me a' forfaughten," said Tammas, lapsing into the dialect of his youth.

"Answer me, is it true?"

"It's been given up since Jean came back," he said, "and if she will become my wife, it'll be given up for good."

"Ay," said Sanders McCormick again. "But she'll no become your wife. For why? Because she's no fitted to be your wife. I despise ye, Tammas Baillie, for what ye have been, but if I allowed ye to take her as she is, I'd never be able to square my conscience—I couldn't face the God that made me. That's what honesty does for a man——" The door opened, and Mrs. McCormick looked in, the hem of her apron still held to her face. "If ye've come in here to greet," said Sanders McCormick, "ye can go out. This is a matter for men, not women. Now, Tammas, I tell ye that your past life is terr'ble to think about, but no one shall say that Sanders McCormick took advantage of it. Jean is my daughter, or she was, and in a few

months her disgrace will be there for every honest eye to see."

"Sandy!" wailed the woman at the door.

"Get ye into the but," he called out, but she came in, closing the door after her. Then McCormick turned again to Tammas, and told him of all that he believed. And Tammas listened until the sorry story was ended, until McCormick leaned back against the mantelshelf to fetch breath. Then he rose from the horse-hair sofa and went towards the door.

"I'll take them back," he said, nodding at the box of curios, "and mebbe Jean'll come up to my house to see them. Mr. McCormick, I thank you for what you've told me, but I'm not eating my words about reforming when I tell you that I don't admire you for what you've said. You're a big man, Sanders, and a hefty; I'm a head the shorter, but I tell you that down in Monte Video I'd have killed a man with my hands if he'd talked to me about his own daughter as you've talked about yours. I did come here to tell you that I wanted Jean. I repeat it, and if she'll have me—and if her disgrace, as you call it, was fifty times what it is, I'd still have her, and honour her. Now, McCormick, you've had your say. You may think you've eased your conscience by telling me what you have, but if your conscience can be eased as easily as all that, God knows what would have become of you if, as a youngster, as I was, you'd emigrated to a country like the Argentine, where men have to meet and fight temptation, not think about it, and blame others for yielding."

McCormick's jaw had dropped. He uttered no sound, not even when he heard the garden gate clash.

Tammas Baillie was deeply in earnest, and he pursued his wooing with chivalric feeling that was not wholly inspired by Jean's story, following the brutal insinuations of her father. Tammas said: "In all my life I've never desired anything so much as I desire you. I'll be a good husband to you, Jean, if you'll take me for what I am."

He would have added what was in his mind—that he himself was not going to her with unsoiled hands, and he was broad-minded enough to take her with any fault that might be hers—but something in her eyes convinced him that no more need be said.

No man was ever more sincere in his determination to turn over the new leaf which for years he had been advised to turn. He had travelled over the world, taking the rough with the smooth, learning to appreciate the difference between temptation in reality and temptation in the abstract; he had been successful in money matters, but this much should be said of him: the disappointment of his younger days, when Jean turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, far outweighed the delights that came with the acquisition of wealth. He had gained a great deal; he had lost more.

"Jean, I love you," he told her. "I'm not a man of nice phrases—you know yourself that all the schooling I ever had was at the bottom of the village with the old dominie. But I don't think you're the kind of woman who needs a velvet tongue to convince her of the sincerity of a man."

And she, the whole of whose thoughts were of the unborn stranger, replied: "Tammas, I don't love you. I have loved only one man, and I can never love anyone else. I have told you why I am ready to become your wife. You'll never upbraid me?"

"Never," said Tammas.

"You'll always bear in mind that I told you the truth before I came to you? It's for the sake of the child."

"I understand that well, Jean, and now I'll tell you something. I've heard men say, aye, and women, that a man can have no real love for the child of another. Jean, that's wrong. Since you told me—and, maybe, it's because I've brought myself to think like this—I'm looking forward to that day as though it were going to hold for me all that Heaven has to give a man. Ye're not laughing, Jean, are ye? And yet, if I told some people that, they'd say, 'Aye, it's the climate that's done it—there's a bee in his bonnet.' But, Jean, I swear to you, I could give that child as much, if not more, love than its own father could have done. There! Have we finished?"

But he could see by the drooping of her eyelids that he was unjustified in crediting himself with all the martyrdom, if such a term applied.

"I know what you're thinking, Jean, that Tammas Baillie would be the last person you'd give your hand to if things—if things were different. But let me tell you that I *do* believe the story that you've told me—the story your father disbelieves. I say that, because, maybe, you'll think I'm

trying to strike a level when I tell you of my own shortcomings. You've heard of me, and of my goings-on. I've sown as many wild oats as is good for any young fellow to sow. When money came easily there was a sore temptation to buy all that money would buy. You've heard of the nights at the old grey house at the top of the village—the debaucheries, the careless, let-the-world-go-hang sort of nights. It's true. That's how a man seeks to soften a disappointment. A woman often steals away to take her life; a man doesn't; he sells his to the devil, and the devil gives him what he considers a good time, for a while. But I've given it all up, Jean. Nothing shall tempt me back. And I'll tell you of another matter, because this world shelters many people who live for the despicable joy of digging up the bones of skeletons. Down in Monte Video there was a dancing-girl, Saidee Bonita. I used to think I loved that girl. I know that she had some sort of affection for me. I took her from the stage, because I was jealous. I allowed her an income sufficient to keep her in what the villagers in Ballyhoustie would call luxury. She came to England a year or two ago. There was a time when I used to say to myself, 'Tam, if Saidee went out of your life there'd be nothing left to live for.' But it's all over now, Jean. I thought I ought to tell you, and you'll remember what I said just now? It isn't a question of levelling up."

¶

FOR two months Tammas Baillie lived the life of a retired gentleman. So circumspect were all his actions, so decorous the conduct of his house, that the minister took him back into his prayers, but this time to thank God for the safe return of "our dear brother, Tammas Baillie, whose gift of a hundred pounds for the renovation of the east window, broken in the autumn gale, would never be forgotten by his grateful fellow-parishioners."

Was Tammas Baillie happy? No, he was not. Many a night, in the quiet of the grey house at the top of the village, he sat down and wrestled with his conscience. "Tam," he would say, "the Lord has been very kind to you, very forgiving. You went out into the world empty-handed, and with a mind ready to take any impression that came along. You made money—you couldn't say how you made it, but it came. You lived a life of which you would have been ashamed to let your old mother know if she were alive. Then you came back, like an old hypocrite, ready to take a good and pure woman to wife, ready to take her with all the arrogance of a dirty slave-driver down in Carolina. It's your money. You've never said it aloud, but sometimes you've whispered it to yourself—money can buy anything, even a good woman. Is it right? No, Tam, it isn't. If an old hypocrite like you can come out of Babylon—that's what the minister called it, the first week you came back—and wash his hands by putting them into a bag of gold, there is no meaning in Justice."

For Tam realised that Jean did not love him, that all she was doing was for the sake of the stranger on its way from the clouds.

They had talked over the day of the marriage—at least, Tam had, and Jean's mother. Tam had been to Edinburgh to buy a great many things that would be necessary to Jean's life in the old grey house. She was to come up a day later to inspect them, for the firm had promised to deliver them at once.

At six o'clock in the evening—it was dusk at the time—a stranger rang the bell, and Tam, seated in the smoke-room on the right of the hall, heard the man ask the whereabouts of Mr. Sanders McCormick's house. Tammas went out to him, and, although he asked no question, he knew that Jean McCormick's husband had come back!

He said: "Come in, man."

The man said: "My name is Robert Henderson."

"Ay, I know that," said Tammas.

"How do you know it?" the stranger asked.

"I don't know," said Tammas. "I guessed it. You're going down to tell your wife that you were not killed in central Africa."

The stranger started to his feet.

"Has the news preceded me?" he asked. "I didn't arrive in England until a few days ago. I was supposed to have died with a party of mining engineers."

"I know all about it," said Tammas. "You left your wife two days after you were married, and a month later she heard that your party had been killed by a hostile tribe."

"You have the whole of the news, my friend, save that I managed to escape after

many weary weeks of suffering. Maybe you're a friend of Mr. McCormick ? "

" Yes," said Tam, as coolly as though he were discussing the cost of renovating that east window in the church. " I happen to know Mr. McCormick."

" And perhaps you'll take me down to the house ? "

" No," said Tam ; " I don't think I will." He was walking about the floor, throwing his answers over his shoulder in a voice that made it obvious to the stranger that he wasn't paying much attention to the questions. In truth, Tammas Baillie was thinking out the knottiest problem that had come his way, and he was thinking it out manfully. Presently he said : " Jean will be mighty pleased to see you, but aren't you afraid that the shock of your coming back so suddenly will do her harm ? "

" I hadn't thought of that," said Henderson. " I'm just dying to see her."

" Ay," said Tam, nodding his head. " That's how I felt, on my way back to Scotland after many years spent in the Argentine. I wanted to see somebody—same as you." He paused, and scrutinized Henderson. " How long have you been away ? " he asked, abruptly.

" Nearly four months now," said Henderson. " Why do you ask ? "

" Have you done well ? "

" Very well, in that I am promised a very fine position with the company who sent me out in the first place."

" That's good," said Tammas, tapping the table with his knuckles, and looking over the other man's head. " Four months, eh ? She's a fine girl, is Jean."

Henderson looked at him in doubt.

" I have known her ever since she was a baby," said Tammas. " We were sweethearts when we were children. There's no call to look like that. I'm going to tell you something in a minute, only its very difficult to think of the right words. Have a smoke ! Here, this box. They're Brazilians—I import them. Phew ! man, but you've made me hot, your coming back like this. It's true, what I told you—we were sweethearts, and when I came back "—he said this with a rush, and his fingers were gripping the edge of the table—" and found that she was a widow, I was ready to move heaven and earth to get her. I won't tell you anything else, save this—she might have married me if you hadn't come back. Four months ! Well, two days won't make much difference to you. I tell you, it would probably frighten her to death if you were to walk in on her now."

Henderson was beginning to gather the significance of the situation.

" Go ye back to Edinburgh for two days," said Tammas. " I'll give you the name of a hotel where they'll do you well. Now, don't interrupt. I'm doing this for your sake and hers, and it doesn't hurt me a bit. Oh, no : I'm going to write a letter to Jean, and I'll send a boy down with it. You can come back at the end of two days. Promise me that. You'll find that everything will be all right. I'll make it smooth. I'll break it to her gently. Did you say you hadn't much money ? I wonder if you'd like to buy this house ? I gave a thousand for it, and you can have it for two-fifty—pay me when you like. Anyway, leave it for a minute."

In the end, and when he had been told everything, Henderson agreed to go back to Edinburgh for two days.

On the following night Jean walked to the top of the village. There was a little knot of people standing in the roadway fifty yards from the grey house. As she approached, they shook their heads sorrowfully, and pointed at the house. The windows were open, and the scraping of fiddles and the clinking of glasses was audible. Said one of the villagers : " Didna I say that Tammas couldna keep it up ? "

Jean went back to her father's house. In the morning she received a letter from Tammas. He had written in a shaky hand :

" I was wrong, Jean. Once a man's bitten he never recovers. The old craving came on me yesterday, and I wired to Edinburgh for a few cronies. We had a gay time last night. Jean, you don't want to marry me. I've known that all along, and something has been telling me lately that I wasn't dealing fairly with the little woman I told you about—Saidee Bonita. I know you can't forgive me for this breaking away, so I'm leaving Ballyhoustie this forenoon."

A month after Robert Henderson was reunited to his wife he received a letter from Monte Video. It wasn't a threat that it contained, but there was a warning that if ever he allowed Jean to want for anything, Tammas Baillie would be after him—slick !

It may be that even now you can see nothing heroic in what Tammas Baillie did. —I didn't, until I learned that the woman, Saidee Bonita, died two years before Robert Henderson returned to Ballyhoustie !

New Limericks

FOR many centuries the art of composing Limericks has been a fascinating one among all kinds and conditions of people. Wit, philosophy and even drama have been cleverly exemplified in the restricted scope of this form of versification. I am indebted to Mr. Langford Reed, the Editor and compiler of "The Complete Limerick Book," for the following exclusively new examples which will appear in the next edition of his anthology.—ED.

A fellow whose first name was Kenneth,
Remarked with a lisp: "I thay Dennith,
There is only one plathe
Where you don't hurt your fathe,
When you fall in the street—and thath
Venith."

W. J. PATTON.

French girl sees the Falls of Lodore—
(She never had seen them before)
"But where is the gold?"
She asks: "I was told
I should see Les Cascades de l'eau d'or!"

SIR GEORGE HENSCHEL

To a person arriving in Heaven,
Said St. Peter, "We dine sharp at seven,
Then breakfast's at eight—
Never mind if you're late,
And there's biscuits and milk at eleven."

JULIAN S. HUXLEY.

Jim Peters, who taught Esperanto,
Had a sister Sal, acting in panto;
But away the minx ran
With the Co.'s comic man—
And Jim ne'er knew where S.P. ran to.

DR. WARSHAW.

There was an old sheikh of Timbuctoo,
Whom it's no use wishing good luck to;
For a crocodile's teeth
Grabbed his pants from beneath—
And what that brute collared he stuck to.

DR. WARSHAW.

A "SPOONERISM" LIMERICK, with Translation

This person hates badly-soiled rats,
In the drain as quite messy, so that's
A sign that I am
Not to dust him a tram;
Besides, he has spurious cats.

This person rates badly-soiled hats,
In the main, as quite dressy, so that's
A sign that I am
Not to trust him a d——;
Besides, he has curious spats.

PROFESSOR IRVINE MASSON (Durham University).

There was a young flapper of Durleigh,
Who had her hair bobbed short and curleigh;
'Twas easy to see
How shapely was she,
For her dresses left off very urleigh.

CHARLES W. HOWARD.

There was an old lady of Devon
Who finding she'd reached ninety-seven;
Being thoughtful and sharp,
Began learning the harp,
To be ready when called up to Heaven.

JULIAN GARDINER.

A typist who worked at Whitehall,
Attended a fancy dress ball,
Some said that she wore
Less behind than before,
While others said—nothing at all.

CAPTAIN H. J. ANDREWS.

To compose a sonata to-day,
Don't proceed in the usual way;
Take your seat on the keys,
Jump about as you please.
" Oh, how modern ! " the critics will say.
F. E GLADSTONE.

Said a moribund songster of Meath,
To his loved one, " Since I can't bequeath
To you, my heart's choice,
My falsetto voice,
I've left you my false set o' teeth."
WALTER WILLIAMSON.

LIMERICK IN VERS LIBRE

There was a young
poet
, from Trinity,
But
though he could
trill
(like a linnet)
he refused to
complete
any poem
with feet, saying
" Idiots ! Can't you see
that what I'm specializing in is
Free
Verse ! "
LOUIS UNTERMEYER.

A young lady from Wilmington, Delaware.
Of the high cost of living was welaware,
Said she : " I suppose,
I can save on my clothes,
I don't care a whoop what the helaware ! "

There once was a huge Dinosaurian,
Prodigious and phantasmagorian,
Who perished of blight
When a wee trilobite
Sneered : " Oh, you are Early Victorian ! "
ARTHUR GUITERMAN.

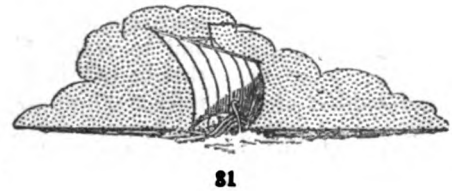
A bridge-player, thirsting for gore,
Left his partner a corpse on the floor;
" De mortuis nil
Nisi bonum," but still—
It is said he'd revoked once before.

A musical Pittsburg Panjandrum,
Imported a " grosse caisse " (or grand drum);
But, sad to relate,
'Twas seized by the State,
Being full of the best contraband rum.

There was an old man of Connecticut,
Whose form had a most apoplectic cut,
His diet in chief
Was sirloin of beef,
Though of mutton he ne'er could reject a cut

Two damsels whose looks were most pious
Exclaimed : " To the beach let's hious,
Where scant bathing suits
Will make men, the bruits,
Just ious, and ious, and ious ! "
M. W. B.

A flea who felt phlebotomous,
Assailed a hippopotamus,
The hippo, he
Sat on the flea,
And goodness, gracious, what a muss !
ARTHUR GUITERMAN.



Father Gaucher's Elixir

A piquant adventure of monastic life

By ALPHONSE DAUDET

Alphonse Daudet, exquisite French writer and immortal, and author of many of the world's best stories, can always raise a smile or draw a tear. In "Father Gaucher's Elixir" the genuineness of his humour is apparent. It is, indeed, a gem—and reveals the story-teller's art at its best.

"DRINK this, neighbour, and tell me what you think of it."

And drop by drop, with the painstaking care of a lapidary counting pearls, the curé of Graveson poured out for me two fingers of a golden-green, warm, sparkling, exquisite liqueur. My stomach was as if bathed in sunlight.

"This is Father Gaucher's elixir, the joy and health of our Provence," said the worthy man, with a triumphant air; "it is made at the convent of Prémontrés, two leagues from your mill. Isn't it better than all the Chartreuses on earth? And if you knew how interesting the story of this elixir is! Listen!"

Thereupon, as artlessly as possible, without the slightest tinge of irony, in that parsonage dining-room, so placid and calm, with its *Road to the Cross* in tiny pictures, and its pretty light curtains ironed like surplices, the abbé began a somewhat sceptical and irreverent anecdote, after the fashion of a tale of Erasmus or d'Assoucy.

"Twenty years ago, the Prémontrés, or the White Fathers, as we Provençals call them, had fallen into utter destitution. If you had seen their convent in those days, it would have made your heart ache.

"The high wall, the Pacôme Tower, were falling in pieces. All around the grass-grown cloisters, the pillars were cracked, the stone saints crumbling in their recesses. Not a stained-glass window whole, not a door that would close; in the courtyards, in the chapels, the wind from the Rhône blew as it blows in Camargue, extinguishing the candles, breaking the leaden sashes of the windows, spilling the water from the holy-water vessels. But the saddest of all was the convent belfry, silent as an empty pigeon-cote; and the fathers, in default of money to buy a bell, were obliged to ring for matins with clappers of almond-wood!

"Poor White Fathers! I can see them now, in the procession on Corpus Christi, pacing sadly along in their patched hoods, pale and thin, fed on pumpkins and water-melons; and behind them, monseigneur the abbé, marching with downcast head, ashamed to exhibit in the sunlight his tarnished crook and his worm-eaten mitre of white wool. The ladies of the fraternity wept with compassion in the ranks, and the stout banner-bearers whispered sneeringly to one another as they pointed to the poor monks:

"'The starlings grow thin when they fly in flocks.'

"The fact is, the unfortunate White Fathers had reached the point where they asked themselves if they would not do better to fly out into the world and to seek pasturage each for himself.

"Now, one day when this grave question was being discussed in the chapter, the prior was informed that Brother Gaucher desired to be heard in the council. I must say for your information, that this Brother Gaucher was the drover of the convent; that is to say, he passed his days waddling from arch to arch through the cloister, driving before him two consumptive cows, which tried to find grass between the cracks of the flag-stones. Supported until he was twelve years old by an old mad woman of the Baux country, called Aunt Bégon, then taken in by the monks, the wretched drover had never been able to learn anything except to drive his beasts, and to repeat his paternoster; and even that he said in Provençal, for his brain was thick and his mind as dull as a leaden dagger. A fervent Christian, however, although somewhat visionary, comfortable in his

haircloth shirt, and inflicting discipline upon himself, with sturdy conviction, and such arms!

"When they saw him come into the chapter-hall, simple and stupid of aspect, saluting the assemblage with a leg thrown back, prior, canons, steward, and everybody began to laugh. That was always the effect produced by that good-natured face, with its grizzly, goat-like beard, and its slightly erratic eyes, whenever it appeared anywhere; so that Brother Gaucher was not disturbed thereby.

"'Reverend Fathers,' he said, in a wheedling voice, playing with his chaplet of olive stones, 'it is quite true that empty casks make the best music. Just imagine that, by dint of cudgelling my poor brain, which was already so hollow, I believe that I have thought out a way to help us out of our poverty. This is how. You know Aunt Bégon, that worthy woman who took care of me when I was small—God rest her soul, the old hag!—she used to sing some very vile songs after drinking. I must tell you then, reverend fathers, that Aunt Bégon, in her lifetime, knew as much about the mountain herbs as an old Corsican blackbird, and more. In fact, towards the end of her life, she compounded an incomparable elixir by mixing five or six kinds of simples together that we picked in the mountains. That was a good many years ago; but I believe that with the aid of St. Augustine and the permission of our worshipful abbé, I might, by careful search, discover the composition of that mysterious elixir. Then we should only have to bottle it and sell it at a rather high price, to enable the community to get rich as nicely as you please, like our brothers of La Trappe and La Grande——'

"He was not allowed to finish. The prior sprang to his feet and fell upon his neck. The canon seized his hands. The steward, even more deeply moved than the rest, kissed respectfully the ragged edge of his cowl. Then they all returned to their chairs to deliberate; and the chapter decided on the spot that the cows should be entrusted to Brother Thrasybule, so that Brother Gaucher might devote himself exclusively to the compounding of his elixir.

"How did the excellent monk succeed in discovering Aunt Bégon's recipe? At the price of what efforts, of what vigils? History does not say. But this much is sure, that after six months, the elixir of the White Fathers was very popular. Throughout the Comtat, in all the Arles country, there was not a farmhouse, not a granary, which had not in the depths of its buttery, amid the bottles of mulled wine and the jars of olives *à la picholine*, a little jug of brown earthenware, sealed with the arms of Provence, and with a monk in a trance on a silver label. Thanks to the popularity of its elixir, the convent of the Prémontrés grew rich very rapidly. The Pâcome Tower was rebuilt. The prior had a new mitre, the church some pretty, stained windows; and in the fine, open-work of the belfry, a whole legion of bells, large and small, burst forth one fine Easter morning, jingling and chiming with all their might.

"As for Brother Gaucher, that unfortunate lay brother, whose rustic manners amused the chapter so much, was never spoken of in the convent. Henceforth they only knew the Reverend Father Gaucher, a man of brains and of great learning, who lived completely apart from the trivial and multifarious occupations of the cloisters, and was shut up all day in his distillery, while thirty monks hunted the mountain for him, seeking fragrant herbs. That distillery, which no one, not even the prior, had the right to enter, was an old, abandoned chapel, at the end of the canons' garden. The simplicity of the worthy fathers had transformed it into something mysterious and redoubtable; and if by chance some audacious and inquisitive young monk happened to get as far as the rosework of the doorway, he retreated very quickly, terrified by the aspect of Father Gaucher, with his sorcerer's beard, leaning over his furnaces, scales in hand; and all about him retorts of red sandstone, huge alembics, serpentine glasses, a whole strange outfit, flaming as if bewitched, in the red gleam of the stained-glass.

"At nightfall, when the last Angelus rang, the door of that abode of mystery would open softly, and the father would betake himself to the church for the evening service. You should have seen the welcome that he received when he passed through the monastery! The brethren drew up in two lines for him to pass. They said to one another:

"'Hush! he knows the secret!'

"The steward followed him and spoke to him with downcast eyes. Amid all this adulation, the father walked along, mopping his forehead, his broad-brimmed, three-

cornered hat placed on the back of his head like a halo, glancing with an air of condescension at the great courtyards full of orange-trees, the blue roofs surmounted by new weather-vanes; and, in the cloister, glaring white between the gracefully carved pillars, the monks, newly dressed, marching two by two with placid faces.

"'They owe all this to me,' the father would say to himself; and every time, that thought caused his bosom to swell with pride.

"The poor man was well punished for it, as you will see.

"Imagine that one evening, during the service, he arrived in the church in a state of extraordinary excitement: red-faced, breathless, his hood awry, and so perturbed that when he took his holy-water he wet his sleeves to the elbow. They thought at first that his excitement was due to being late; but when they saw him make profound reverences to the organ and the galleries instead of saluting the main altar, when they saw him rush through the church like a gust of wind, wander about the choir for five minutes looking for his stall, and, when once seated, bow to the right and left with a beatific smile, a murmur of amazement ran through the three naves. From breviary to breviary the monks whispered:

"'What can be the matter with our Father Gaucher? What can be the matter with our Father Gaucher?'

"Twice the prior, in his annoyance, struck his crook on the flagstones to enjoin silence. In the choir the psalms continued, but the responses lacked vigour.

"Suddenly, in the very middle of the *Ave verum*, lo and behold, Father Gaucher fell backward in his stall and chanted, in a voice of thunder:

'In Paris there is a White Father—
Patatin, patatan, tarabin, taraban.'

"General consternation. Everybody rose.

"'Carry him away! he is possessed!' they cried.

"The canons crossed themselves. Monseigneur's crook waved frantically. But Father Gaucher neither saw nor heard anything; the two sturdy monks were obliged to drag him away through the small door of the choir, struggling like one bewitched and continuing his *patatans* and his *tarabans* louder than ever.

"The next morning, at daybreak, the poor wretch was on his knees in the prior's oratory, confessing his sin with a flood of tears.

"'It was the elixir, monseigneur, it was the elixir that took me by surprise,' he said, beating his breast. And seeing him so heart-broken, so penitent, the good prior was deeply moved himself.

"'Come, come, Father Gaucher, calm yourself; all this will dry up like the dew in the sunshine. After all, the scandal was not so great as you think. To be sure there was a song which was a little—however, we must hope that the novices did not hear it. Now, tell me just how the thing happened to you. It was while you were trying the elixir, was it not? Your hand was a little too heavy. Yes, yes, I understand. It was like Brother Schwartz, the inventor of powder; you were the victim of your invention. And tell me, my dear friend, is it really necessary that you should try this terrible elixir upon yourself?"

"'Unluckily, yes, monseigneur. The test-tube, to be sure, gives me the strength and degree of heat of the alcohol; but for the finishing touch, the velvety smoothness, I can trust nothing but my tongue.'

"'Ah! very good. But listen to what I ask. When you taste the elixir thus as a duty, does it taste good to you? Do you enjoy it?'

"'Alas! yes, monseigneur,' said the unhappy father, turning as red as a beet; 'for two evenings now I have found such a bouquet, such an aroma in it! It is certainly the devil who has played me this vile trick. So I have determined only to use the test-tube henceforth. If the liqueur is not as fine, if it is not as smooth as before, so much the worse!'

"'Do nothing of the sort,' interrupted the prior, earnestly. 'We must not take the risk of displeasing our customers. All that you have to do, now that you are warned, is to be on your guard. Tell me, how much do you need to drink, for your taste? Fifteen or twenty drops, is it not? Let us say twenty drops. The devil will be very smart if he can catch you in twenty drops. Moreover, to avert all chance of accident, I excuse you from coming to church henceforth. You will repeat the evening service in the distillery. And now, go in peace, my father, and above all things count your drops carefully.'

"Alas! the poor father counted his drops to no purpose; the demon had him in his clutch, and he did not let him go.

"The distillery heard some strange services!

"In the daytime everything went well. The father was tranquil enough; he prepared his retorts, his alembics, carefully assorted his herbs, all Provençal herbs, fine and grey, and burned with perfume and sunlight. But at night, when the simples were steeped and the elixir was cooling in great basins of red copper, the poor man's martyrdom began.

"'Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty.'

"'The drops fell from the tube into the silver goblet. Those twenty, the father swallowed at one draught, almost without enjoyment. It was only the twenty-first that aroused his longing. Oh, that twenty-first drop! To avoid temptation, he would go and kneel at the end of the laboratory and bury himself in his paternosters. But from the still warm liqueur there ascended a wreath of smoke heavily laden with aromatic odours, which came prowling about him, and drew him back towards the basins, whether he would or no. The liqueur was a beautiful golden-green. Leaning over it, with distended nostrils, the father stirred it gently with his tube, and it seemed to him that he saw, in the sparkling little spangles on the surface of the emerald lake, Aunt Bégon's eyes laughing and snapping as they looked at him.

"'Nonsense! just one more drop!'

"And from drop to drop the poor wretch ended by filling his goblet to the brim. Then, at the end of his strength, he would sink down in an easy-chair; and his body relaxed, his eyes half-closed, he would enjoy his sin by little sips, murmuring to himself with ecstatic remorse:

"'Ah! I am damning myself! I am damning myself!'

"The most terrible part of it was, that in the depths of that diabolical elixir, he remembered, by some witchery or other, all Aunt Bégon's naughty songs: 'There were three little gossips, who talked of giving a feast'; or 'Master André's shepherdess goes to the woods alone'; and always the famous one of the White Fathers: 'Patatin, patatan!'

"Imagine his confusion the next day when his old neighbours said to him, with a sly expression:

"'Ha! ha! Father Gaucher, you had grasshoppers in your head when you went to bed last night.'

"Then there were tears, despair, fasting, haircloth, and penance. But nothing could prevail against the demon of the elixir; and every evening, at the same hour, the possession began anew.

"Meanwhile, orders rained upon the abbey like a blessing from heaven. They came from Nîmes, from Aix, from Avignon, from Marseilles. From day to day the convent assumed the aspect of a factory. There were packing brothers, labelling brothers, brothers to attend to the correspondence, drayman brothers; the service of God lost a few strokes of the bell now and then, to be sure, but the poor people of the neighbourhood lost nothing, I assure you.

"But one fine Sunday morning, while the steward was reading to the chapter his annual inventory, and the good canons were listening with sparkling eyes and smiling lips, behold Father Gaucher rushed into the midst of the conference, exclaiming:

"'It is all over! I can't stand it any longer! Give me back my cows.'

"'What is the matter, pray, Father Gaucher?' asked the prior, who had a shrewd idea what the matter might be.

"'The matter, monseigneur? The matter is that I am laying up for myself an eternity of hell-fire and blows with the pitchfork. The matter is that I am drinking, drinking like a miserable wretch.'

"'But I told you to count your drops.'

"'Count my drops! Oh, yes! I should have to count them by goblets now. Yes, my fathers, I have reached that point. Three flasks an evening. You must see that that cannot last. So let whomsoever you choose make the elixir. May God's fire consume me if I touch it again.'

"'The chapter laughed no longer.

"'But you are ruining us, unhappy man!' cried the steward, waving his ledger.

"'Do you prefer that I should damn myself for ever?'

"Thereupon the prior rose.

"'My fathers,' he said, putting forth his beautiful white hand, upon which the pastoral ring glistened, 'there is a way to arrange everything. It is at night, is it not, my dear son, that the demon tempts you?'

"'Yes, monsieur prior, regularly every evening. So now, when night comes, a cold sweat takes me, saving your presence, like Capitou's donkey when he saw the saddle coming.'

"'Tis well! be comforted. Henceforth, every evening, at the service, we will repeat in your favour the prayer of St.

Augustine, to which plenary indulgence is attached. With that, whatever happens, you are safe. It affords absolution during sin.'

"'Oh, well, in that case, thanks, monsieur prior!'

"And without asking anything more, Father Gaucher returned to his laboratory, as light-hearted as a lark.

"And in truth, from that day forward, every evening at the end of the complines, the officiating father never failed to say:

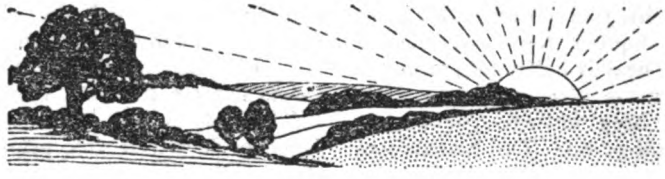
"'Let us pray for our poor Father Gaucher, who is sacrificing his soul in the interest of the community. *Oremus, Domine*——'

And while the prayer ran quivering over those white hoods, prostrate in the shadow of the nave, as a light breeze rushes over the snow, yonder at the other end of the convent, behind the flaming, stained-glass of the distillery, Father Gaucher could be heard singing at the top of his lungs:

"'In Paris there is a White Father,
Patatin, patatan, tarabin, taraban;
In Paris there is a White Father
Who dances with the nuns,
Trin, trin, trin, in a garden,
Who dances with the——'"

Here the good curé stopped, in dismay.

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "suppose my parishioners should hear me!"



Home-made History :: By HANSARD WATT

No. III—JOHN

I SING of John, and you shall hear
But little to his credit;
And if you chance to have a tear
You may be moved to shed it;
For John was not the kind of king
Whose praises I can loudly sing.

His moods were never light and gay,
His smiles were never sunny,
And even when he had his way
And other people's money,
He never was, and never tried
To be content and satisfied.

He, by increasing debts assailed,
From bad to worse proceeded;
And when all other methods failed
Of finding what he needed,
His wandering attention fell
Upon the tents of Israel.

The Hebrews, though to saving prone,
And richer than Aladdin,
Were thankful soon to call their own
The garments they were clad in;
From which it is to be implied
He left them little else beside.

And if, as frequently occurr'd,
Some bolder than their fellows
Came to the palace and demurr'd,
The king, despite their bellows,
In dismal dungeons underneath
Extracted their unwilling teeth.

But we will pass from scenes like these
Which cannot but be tearful:
Our aim and object is to please,
And be extremely cheerful;
And so in closing we will sing
The fate that overtook the king.

'Twas apoplectic shock, methinks,
That killed this royal sinner,
Caused by the absence of his links
When dressing for his dinner;
His face went purple, when he knew
His collar-studs were missing too.

They say—those tremblers who beheld—
'Twas awful to behold him;
"Lost in the Wash!" he fairly yelled,
"Yea, even so!" they told him.
Whereat, "Alas! Alas!" he cried,
And wrung his hands and slowly died.

The Murders in the Rue Morgue

Of all the mystery stories from the pen of a master this one, in my opinion, exhibits most powerfully the author's analytical gift and his genius for the macabre.—ED.

By EDGAR ALLAN POE

"What song the Syrens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, although puzzling questions, are not beyond *all* conjecture."

—SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

THE mental features discoursed of as the analytical are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis. We appreciate them only in their effects. We know of them, among other things, that they are always to their possessor, when inordinately possessed, a source of the liveliest enjoyment. As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which *disentangles*. He derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations bringing his talent into play. He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, of hieroglyphics; exhibiting in his solutions of each a degree of acumen which appears to the ordinary apprehension preternatural. His results, brought about by the very soul and essence of method, have, in truth, the whole air of intuition.

The faculty of re-solution is possibly much invigorated by mathematical study, and especially by that highest branch of it which, unjustly, and merely on account of its retrograde operations, has been called, as if *par excellence*, analysis. Yet to calculate is not in itself to analyse. A chess-player, for example, does the one, without effort at the other. It follows that the game of chess, in its effects upon mental character, is greatly misunderstood. I am not now writing a treatise, but simply prefacing a somewhat peculiar narrative by observations very much at random; I will, therefore, take occasion to assert that the higher powers of the reflective intellect are more decidedly and more usefully tasked by the unostentatious game of draughts than by all the elaborate frivolity of chess. In this latter, where the pieces have different and bizarre motions, with various and variable values, what is only complex, is mistaken (a not unusual error) for what is profound. The *attention* is here called powerfully into play. If it flag for an instant, an oversight is committed, resulting in injury or defeat. The possible moves being not only manifold, but involute, the chances of such oversights are multiplied; and in nine cases out of ten, it is the more concentrative rather than the more acute player who conquers. In draughts, on the contrary, where the moves are *unique* and have but little variation, the probabilities of inadvertence are diminished, and the mere attention being left comparatively unemployed, what advantages are obtained by either party are obtained by superior acumen. To be less abstract—Let us suppose a game of draughts where the pieces are reduced to four kings, and where, of course, no oversight is to be expected. It is obvious that here the victory can be decided (the players being at all equal) only by some *recherché* movement, the result of some strong exertion of the intellect. Deprived of ordinary resources, the analyst throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith, and not unfrequently sees thus, at a glance, the sole methods (sometimes, indeed, absurdly simple ones) by which he may seduce into error or hurry into miscalculation.

Whist has long been noted for its influence upon what is termed the calculating power; and men of the highest order of intellect have been known to take an apparently unaccountable delight in it, while eschewing chess as frivolous. Beyond doubt there is nothing of a similar nature so greatly tasking the faculty of analysis. The best chess-player in Christendom *may* be little more than the best player of chess; but proficiency in whist implies capacity for success in all these more important undertakings where mind struggles with mind. When I say proficiency, I mean that perfection in the

game which includes a comprehension of *all* the sources whence legitimate advantage may be derived. These are not only manifold, but multiform, and lie frequently among recesses of thought altogether inaccessible to the ordinary understanding. To observe attentively is to remember distinctly; and, so far, the concentrative chess-player will do very well at whist; while the rules of Hoyle (themselves based upon the mere mechanism of the game) are sufficiently and generally comprehensible.

Thus, to have a retentive memory, and to proceed by "the book," are points commonly regarded as the sum total of good playing. But it is in matters beyond the limits of mere rule that the skill of the analyst is evinced. He makes, in silence, a host of observations and inferences. So, perhaps, do his companions; and the difference in the extent of the information obtained lies not so much in the validity of the inference as in the quality of the observation.

The necessary knowledge is that of *what* to observe. Our player confines himself not at all; nor, because the game is the object, does he reject deductions from things external to the game. He examines the countenance of his partner, comparing it carefully with that of each of his opponents. He considers the mode of assorting the cards in each hand; often counting trump by trump, and honour by honour, through the glances bestowed by their holders upon each. He notes every variation of face as the play progresses, gathering a fund of thought from the differences in the expression of certainty, of surprise, of triumph, or chagrin. From the manner of gathering up a trick he judges whether the person taking it can make another in the suit. He recognizes what is played through feint, by the air with which it is thrown upon the table.

A casual or inadvertent word; the accidental dropping or turning of a card, with the accompanying anxiety or carelessness in regard to its concealment; the counting of the tricks, with the order of their arrangement; embarrassment, hesitation, eagerness or trepidation—all afford, to his apparently intuitive perception, indications of the true state of affairs. The first two or three rounds having been played, he is in full possession of the contents of each hand, and thenceforward puts down his cards with as absolute a precision of purpose as if the rest of the party had turned outward the faces of their own.

The analytical power should not be confounded with simple ingenuity; for while the analyst is necessarily ingenious, the ingenious man is often remarkably incapable of analysis. The constructive or combining power, by which ingenuity is usually manifested, and to which the phrenologists (I believe erroneously) have assigned a separate organ, supposing it a primitive faculty, has been so frequently seen in those whose intellect bordered otherwise upon idiocy, as to have attracted general observation among writers on morals. Between ingenuity and the analytic ability there exists a difference far greater, indeed, than that between the fancy and the imagination, but of a character very strictly analogous. It will be found, in fact, that the ingenious are always fanciful, and the *truly* imaginative never otherwise than analytic.

The narrative which follows will appear to the reader somewhat in the light of a commentary upon these propositions.

¶

RESIDING in Paris during the spring and part of the summer of 18—, I there became acquainted with a Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin. This young gentleman was of an excellent—indeed of an illustrious—family, but, by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world, or to care for the retrieval of his fortunes. By courtesy of his creditors there still remained in his possession a small remnant of his patrimony; and, upon the income arising from this, he managed, by means of a rigorous economy, to procure the necessaries of life, without troubling himself about its superfluities. Books, indeed, were his sole luxuries.

Our first meeting was at an obscure library in the Rue Montmartre, where the accident of our both being in search of the same very rare and very remarkable volume, brought us into closer communion. We saw each other again and again. I was deeply interested in the little family history which he detailed to me with all that candour which a Frenchman indulges whenever mere self is the theme. I was astonished, too, at the vast extent of his reading; and, above all, I felt my soul enkindled within me by the wild fervour, and the vivid freshness of his imagination. Seeking in Paris the objects I then sought, I felt that

the society of such a man would be to me a treasure beyond price; and this feeling I frankly confided to him.

It was at length arranged that we should live together during my stay in the city; and as my worldly circumstances were somewhat less embarrassed than his own, I was permitted to be at the expense of renting, and furnishing in a style which suited the rather fantastic gloom of our common temper, a time-eaten and grotesque mansion, long deserted through superstitions into which we did not inquire, and tottering to its fall in a retired and desolate portion of the Faubourg St. Germain.

Had the routine of our life at this place been known to the world, we should have been regarded as madmen—although, perhaps, as madmen of a harmless nature. Our seclusion was perfect. We admitted no visitors. Indeed, the locality of our retirement had been carefully kept a secret from my own former associates; and it had been many years since Dupin had ceased to know or be known in Paris. We existed within ourselves alone.

It was a freak of fancy in my friend (for what else shall I call it?) to be enamoured of the night for her own sake; and into this *bizarrerie*, as into all his others, I quietly fell, giving myself up to his wild whims with a perfect abandon. The sable divinity would not herself dwell with us always; but we could counterfeit her presence. At the first dawn of the morning we closed all the massy shutters of our old building; lighted a couple of tapers which, strongly perfumed, threw out only the ghastliest and feeblest of rays. By the aid of these we then busied our souls in dreams—reading, writing, or conversing, until warned by the clock of the advent of the true Darkness. Then we sallied forth into the streets, arm in arm, continuing the topics of the day, or roaming far and wide until a late hour, seeking, amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city, that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford.

At such times I could not help remarking and admiring (although from his rich ideality I had been prepared to expect it) a peculiar analytic ability in Dupin. He seemed, too, to take an eager delight in its exercise—if not exactly in its display—and did not hesitate to confess the pleasure thus derived. He boasted to me, with a low, chuckling laugh, that most men, in respect to himself, wore windows in their bosoms, and was wont to follow up such assertions by direct and very startling proofs of his intimate knowledge of my own. His manner at these moments was frigid and abstract; his eyes were vacant in expression; while his voice, usually a rich tenor, rose into a treble which would have sounded petulantly but for the deliberateness and entire distinctness of the enunciation. Observing him in these moods, I often dwelt meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-Part Soul, and amused myself with the fancy of a double Dupin—the creative and the resolvent.

Let it not be supposed, from what I have just said, that I am detailing any mystery, or penning any romance. What I have described in the Frenchman was merely the result of an excited, or perhaps of a diseased, intelligence. But of the character of his remarks at the periods in question an example will best convey the idea.

We were strolling one night down a long dirty street, in the vicinity of the Palais Royal. Being both, apparently, occupied with thought, neither of us had spoken a syllable for fifteen minutes, at least. All at once Dupin broke forth with these words:

"He is a very little fellow, that's true, and would do better for the *Théâtre des Variétés*."

"There can be no doubt of that," I replied, unwittingly, and not at first observing (so much had I been absorbed in reflection) the extraordinary manner in which the speaker had chimed in with my meditations. In an instant afterward I recollected myself, and my astonishment was profound.

"Dupin," said I gravely, "this is beyond my comprehension. I do not hesitate to say that I am amazed, and can scarcely credit my senses. How was it possible you should know I was thinking of——?" Here I paused, to ascertain beyond a doubt whether he really knew of whom I thought.

"Of Chantilly," said he; "why do you pause? You were remarking to yourself that his diminutive figure unfitted him for tragedy."

This was precisely what had formed the subject of my reflections. Chantilly was a quondam cobbler of the Rue St. Denis, who, becoming stage-mad, had attempted the *rôle* of Xerxes, in Crébillon's tragedy so called, and been notoriously pasquinaded for his pains.

"Tell me, for Heaven's sake," I exclaimed, "the method—if method there is

—by which you have been enabled to fathom my soul in this matter." In fact, I was even more startled than I would have been willing to express.

"It was the fruiterer," replied my friend, "who brought you to the conclusion that the mender of soles was not of sufficient height for Xerxes *et id genus omne*."

"The fruiterer!—you astonish me—I know no fruiterer whomsoever."

"The man who ran up against you as we entered the street—it may have been fifteen minutes ago."

I now remembered that, in fact, a fruiterer, carrying upon his head a large basket of apples, had nearly thrown me down, by accident, as we passed from the Rue C—— into the thoroughfare where we stood; but what this had to do with Chantilly I could not possibly understand.

There was not a particle of *charlatanerie* about Dupin. "I will explain," he said, "and that you may comprehend all clearly, we will first retrace the course of your meditations, from the moment in which I spoke to you until that of the rencontre with the fruiterer in question. The larger links of the chain run thus—Chantilly, Orion, Dr. Nichols, Epicurus, Stereotomy, the street stones, the fruiterer."

There are few persons who have not, at some period of their lives, amused themselves in retracing the steps by which particular conclusions of their own minds have been attained. The occupation is often full of interest; and he who attempts it for the first time is astonished by the apparently illimitable distance and incoherence between the starting-point and the goal. What, then, must have been my amazement when I heard the Frenchman speak what he had just spoken, and when I could not help acknowledging that he had spoken the truth! He continued:

"We had been talking of horses, if I remember aright, just before leaving the Rue C——. This was the last subject we discussed. As we crossed into the street, a fruiterer, with a large basket upon his head, brushing quickly past us, thrust you upon a pile of paving-stones collected at a spot where the causeway is undergoing repair. You stepped upon one of the loose fragments, slipped, slightly strained your ankle, appeared vexed or sulky, muttered a few words, turned to look at the pile, and then proceeded in silence. I was not particularly attentive to what you did; but observation has become with me, of late, a species of necessity.

"You kept your eyes upon the ground—glancing, with a petulant expression, at the holes and ruts in the pavement (so that I saw you were still thinking of the stones), until we reached the little alley called Lamartine, which has been paved, by way of experiment, with the overlapping and riveted blocks. Here your countenance brightened up, and, perceiving your lips move, I could not doubt that you murmured the word 'stereotomy,' a term very affectedly applied to this species of pavement. I knew that you could not say to yourself 'stereotomy' without being brought to think of atomics, and thus of the theories of Epicurus; and since, when we discussed this subject not very long ago, I mentioned to you how singularly, yet with how little notice, the vague guesses of that noble Greek had met with confirmation in the late nebular cosmogony, I felt that you could not avoid casting your eyes upward to the great nebula in Orion, and I certainly expected that you would do so. You did look up; and I was now assured that I had correctly followed your steps. But in that bitter tirade upon Chantilly, which appeared in yesterday's *Musée*, the satirist, making some disgraceful allusions to the cobbler's change of name upon assuming the buskin, quoted a Latin line about which we have often conversed. I mean the line—

Perdidit antiquum litera prima sonum.

I had told you that this was in reference to Orion, formerly written Urion; and, from certain pungencies connected with this explanation, I was aware that you could not have forgotten it. It was clear, therefore, that you would not fail to combine the two ideas of Orion and Chantilly. That you did combine them I saw by the character of the smile which passed over your lips. You thought of the poor cobbler's immolation. So far, you had been stooping in your gait; but now I saw you draw yourself up to your full height. I was then sure that you reflected upon the diminutive figure of Chantilly. At this point I interrupted your meditations to remark that as, in fact, he *was* a very little fellow, that Chantilly, he would do better at the *Théâtre des Variétés*."

Not long after this, we were looking over an evening edition of the *Gazette des Tribunaux* when the following paragraphs arrested our attention:

" EXTRAORDINARY MURDERS.—This morning, about three o'clock, the inhabitants of the Quartier St. Roch were aroused from sleep by a succession of terrific shrieks, issuing, apparently, from the fourth story of a house in the Rue Morgue, known to be in the sole occupancy of one Madame L'Espanaye, and her daughter, Mademoiselle Camille L'Espanaye. After some delay, occasioned by a fruitless attempt to procure admission in the usual manner, the gateway was broken in with a crowbar, and eight or ten of the neighbours entered, accompanied by two gendarmes.

" By this time the cries had ceased; but, as the party rushed up the first flight of stairs, two or more rough voices, in angry contention, were distinguished, and seemed to proceed from the upper part of the house. As the second landing was reached, these sounds, also, had ceased, and everything remained perfectly quiet. The party spread themselves, and hurried from room to room. Upon arriving at a large back chamber in the fourth story (the door of which, being found locked, with the key inside, was forced open), a spectacle presented itself which struck everyone present not less with horror than with astonishment.

" The apartment was in the wildest disorder—the furniture broken and thrown about in all directions. There was only one bedstead; and from this the bed had been removed, and thrown into the middle of the floor. On a chair lay a razor, besmeared with blood. On the hearth were two or three long and thick tresses of grey human hair, also dabbled in blood, and seeming to have been pulled out by the roots. Upon the floor were found four napoleons, an ear-ring of topaz, three large silver spoons, three smaller of *métal d'Alger*, and two bags, containing nearly four thousand francs in gold. The drawers of a bureau, which stood in one corner, were open, and had been, apparently, rifled, although many articles still remained in them. A small iron safe was discovered under the *bed* (not under the bedstead). It was open, with a key still in the door. It had no contents beyond a few old letters, and other papers of little consequence.

" Of Madame L'Espanaye no traces were here seen; but an unusual quantity of soot being observed in the fireplace, a search was made in the chimney, and (horrible to relate!) the corpse of the daughter, head downward, was dragged therefrom; it having been thus forced up the narrow aperture for a considerable distance. The body was quite warm. Upon examining it, many excoriations were perceived, no doubt occasioned by the violence with which it had been thrust up and disengaged. Upon the face were many severe scratches, and, upon the throat, dark bruises and deep indentations of finger nails, as if the deceased had been throttled.

" After a thorough investigation of every portion of the house, without further discovery, the party made its way into a small paved yard in the rear of the building, where lay the corpse of the old lady, with her throat so entirely cut that, upon an attempt to raise her, the head fell off. The body, as well as the head, was fearfully mutilated—the former so much so as scarcely to retain any semblance of humanity.

" To this horrible mystery there is not as yet, we believe, the slightest clew."

¶

THE next day's paper had these additional particulars:

" THE TRAGEDY IN THE RUE MORGUE.—Many individuals have been examined in relation to this most extraordinary and frightful affair " [the word '*affaire*' has not yet in France that levity of import which it conveys with us], " but nothing whatever has transpired to throw light upon it. We give below all the material testimony elicited.

" *Pauline Dubourg*, laundress, deposes that she has known both the deceased for three years, having washed for them during that period. The old lady and her daughter seemed on good terms—very affectionate towards each other. They were excellent pay. Could not speak in regard to their mode or means of living. Believed that Madame L. told fortunes for a living. Was reputed to have money put by. Never met any persons in the house when she called for the clothes or took them home. Was sure that they had no servant. There appeared to be no furniture in any part of the building, except in the fourth story.

" *Pierre Moreau*, tobacconist, deposes that he has been in the habit of selling small quantities of tobacco and snuff to Madame L'Espanaye for nearly four years. Was born in the neighbourhood, and has always resided there. The deceased and her daughter had occupied the house in which

the corpses were found for more than six years. It was formerly occupied by a jeweller, who under-let the upper rooms to various persons. The house was the property of Madame L. She became dissatisfied with the abuse of the premises by her tenant, and moved into them herself, refusing to let any portion. The old lady was childish. Witness had seen the daughter some five or six times during the six years. The two lived an exceedingly retired life—were reputed to have money. Had heard it said among the neighbours that Madame L. told fortunes—did not believe it. Had never seen any person enter the door except the old lady and her daughter, a porter once or twice, and a physician some eight or ten times.

"Many other persons, neighbours, gave evidence to the same effect. No one was spoken of as frequenting the house. It was not known whether there were any living connections of Madame L. and her daughter. The shutters of the front windows were seldom opened. Those in the rear were always closed, with the exception of the large back room, fourth story. The house was a good house—not very old.

"*Isidore Musèt*, gendarme, deposes that he was called to the house about three o'clock in the morning, and found some twenty or thirty persons at the gateway, endeavouring to gain admittance. Forced it open, at length, with a bayonet—not with a crowbar. Had but little difficulty in getting it open, on account of its being a double, or folding gate, and bolted neither at bottom nor top. The shrieks were continued until the gate was forced—and then suddenly ceased. They seemed to be screams of some person (or persons) in great agony—were loud and drawn out, not short and quick. Witness led the way upstairs. Upon reaching the first landing, heard two voices in loud and angry contention—the one a gruff voice, the other much shriller—a very strange voice. Could distinguish some words of the former, which was that of a Frenchman. Was positive that it was not a woman's voice. Could distinguish the words '*sacré*' and '*diable*.' The shrill voice was that of a foreigner. Could not be sure whether it was the voice of a man or of a woman. Could not make out what was said, but believed the language to be Spanish. The state of the room and of the bodies was described by this witness as we described them yesterday.

"*Henri Duval*, a neighbour, and by trade a silversmith, deposes that he was one of the party who first entered the house. Corroborates the testimony of Mustè in general. As soon as they forced an entrance, they reclosed the door, to keep out the crowd, which collected very fast, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour. The shrill voice, this witness thinks, was that of an Italian. Was certain it was not French. Could not be sure that it was a man's voice. It might have been a woman's. Was not acquainted with the Italian language. Could not distinguish the words, but was convinced by the intonation that the speaker was an Italian. Knew Madame L. and her daughter. Had conversed with both frequently. Was sure that the shrill voice was not that of either of the deceased.

"—— *Odenheimer*, restaurateur. This witness volunteered his testimony. Not speaking French, was examined through an interpreter. Is a native of Amsterdam. Was passing the house at the time of the shrieks. They lasted for several minutes—probably ten. They were long and loud—very awful and distressing. Was one of those who entered the building. Corroborated the previous evidence in every respect but one. Was sure that the shrill voice was that of a man—of a Frenchman. Could not distinguish the words uttered. They were loud and quick—unequal—spoken apparently in fear as well as in anger. The voice was harsh—not so much shrill as harsh. Could not call it a shrill voice. The gruff voice said repeatedly '*sacré*,' '*diable*,' and once '*mon Dieu*.'

"*Jules Mignaud*, banker, of the firm of Mignaud et Fils, Rue Deloraine. Is the elder Mignaud. Madame L'Espanaye had some property. Had opened an account with his banking house in the spring of the year —— (eight years previously). Made frequent deposits in small sums. Had checked for nothing until the third day before her death, when she took out in person the sum of 4,000 francs. This sum was paid in gold, and a clerk sent home with the money.

"*Adolphe Le Bon*, clerk to Mignaud et Fils, deposes that on the day in question, about noon, he accompanied Madame L'Espanaye to her residence with the 4,000 francs put up in two bags. Upon the door being opened, Mademoiselle L. appeared and took from his hands one of the bags, while the old lady relieved him of the

other. He then bowed and departed. Did not see any person in the street at the time. It is a by-street—very lonely.

"*William Bird*, tailor, deposes that he was one of the party who entered the house. Is an Englishman. Has lived in Paris two years. Was one of the first to ascend the stairs. Heard the voices in contention. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Could make out several words, but cannot now remember all. Heard distinctly '*sacré*' and '*mon Dieu*.' There was a sound at the moment as if of several persons struggling—a scraping and scuffling sound. The shrill voice was very loud—louder than the gruff one. Is sure that it was not the voice of an Englishman. Appeared to be that of a German. Might have been a woman's voice. Does not understand German.

"Four of the above-named witnesses, being recalled, deposed that the door of the chamber in which was found the body of Mademoiselle L. was locked on the inside when the party reached it. Everything was perfectly silent—no groans or noises of any kind. Upon forcing the door no person was seen. The windows, both of the back and front room, were down and firmly fastened from within. A door between the two rooms was closed, but not locked. The door leading from the front room into the passage was locked with the key on the inside. A small room in the front of the house, on the fourth story, at the head of the passage, was open, the door being ajar. This room was crowded with old beds, boxes, and so forth. These were carefully removed and searched. There was not an inch of any portion of the house which was not carefully searched. Sweeps were sent up and down the chimneys. The house was a four-story one, with garrets (*mansardes*). A trap-door on the roof was nailed down very securely—did not appear to have been opened for years. The time elapsing between the hearing of the voices in contention and the breaking open of the room door was variously stated by the witnesses. Some made it as short as three minutes—some as long as five. The door was opened with difficulty.

"*Alfonzo Garcio*, undertaker, deposes that he resides in the Rue Morgue. Is a native of Spain. Was one of the party who entered the house. Did not proceed upstairs. Is nervous, and was apprehensive of the consequences of agitation. Heard the voices in contention. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Could not distinguish what was said. The shrill voice was that of an Englishman—is sure of this. Does not understand the English language, but judges by the intonation.

"*Alberto Montani*, confectioner, deposes that he was among the first to ascend the stairs. Heard the voices in question. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Distinguished several words. The speaker appeared to be expostulating. Could not make out the words of the shrill voice. Spoke quick and unevenly. Thinks it the voice of a Russian. Corroborates the general testimony. Is an Italian. Never conversed with a native of Russia.

"Several witnesses, recalled, here testified that the chimneys of all the rooms on the fourth story were too narrow to admit the passage of a human being. By 'sweeps' were meant cylindrical sweeping-brushes, such as are employed by those who clean chimneys. These brushes were passed up and down every flue in the house. There is no back passage by which anyone could have descended while the party proceeded upstairs. The body of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye was so firmly wedged in the chimney that it could not be got down until four or five of the party united their strength.

"*Paul Dumas*, physician, deposes that he was called to view the bodies about daybreak. They were both then lying on the sacking of the bedstead in the chamber where Mademoiselle L. was found. The corpse of the young lady was much bruised and excoriated. The fact that it had been thrust up the chimney would sufficiently account for these appearances. The throat was greatly chafed. There were several deep scratches just below the chin, together with a series of livid spots which were evidently the impression of fingers. The face was fearfully discoloured, and the eyeballs protruded. The tongue had been partially bitten through. A large bruise was discovered upon the pit of the stomach, produced, apparently, by the pressure of a knee.

"In the opinion of M. Dumas, Mademoiselle L'Espanaye had been throttled to death by some person or persons unknown. The corpse of the mother was horribly mutilated. All the bones of the right leg and arm were more or less shattered. The left tibia much splintered, as well as all the ribs of the left side. Whole body dreadfully bruised and discoloured. It was not possible

to say how the injuries had been inflicted. A heavy club of wood, or a broad bar of iron —a chair—any large, heavy, and obtuse weapon would have produced such results, if wielded by the hands of a very powerful man. No woman could have inflicted the blows with any weapon. The head of the deceased, when seen by witness, was entirely separated from the body, and was also greatly shattered. The throat had evidently been cut with some very sharp instrument—probably with a razor.

"*Alexandre Etienne*, surgeon, was called with M. Dumas, to view the bodies. Corroborated the testimony of M. Dumas.

"Nothing further of importance was elicited, although several other persons were examined. A murder so mysterious, and so perplexing in all its particulars, was never before committed in Paris—if, indeed, a murder has been committed at all. The police are entirely at fault—an unusual occurrence in affairs of this nature. There is not, however, the shadow of a clew."

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THE evening edition of the paper stated that the greatest excitement still continued in the Quartier St. Roch—that the premises in question had been carefully re-searched, and fresh examinations of witnesses instituted, but all to no purpose. A postscript, however, mentioned that Adolphe Le Bon had been arrested and imprisoned—although nothing appeared to criminate him, beyond the facts already detailed.

Dupin seemed singularly interested in the progress of this affair—at least, so I judged from his manner, for he made no comments. It was only after the announcement that Le Bon had been imprisoned that he asked me my opinion respecting the murders.

I could merely agree with all Paris in considering them an insoluble mystery. I saw no means by which it would be possible to trace the murderer.

"We must not judge of the means," said Dupin, "by this shell of an examination. The Parisian police, so much extolled for acumen, are cunning, but no more. There is no method in their proceedings, beyond the method of the moment. They make a vast parade of measures; but, not unfrequently, these are so ill adapted to the objects proposed, as to put us in mind of Monsieur Jourdain's calling for his *robe-de-chambre—pour mieux entendre la musique*. The results attained by them are not unfrequently surprising, but, for the most part, are brought about by simple diligence and activity. When these qualities are unavailing, their schemes fail. Vidocq, for example, was a good guesser, and a persevering man. But, without educated thought, he erred continually by the very intensity of his investigations. He impaired his vision by holding the object too close. He might see, perhaps, one or two points with unusual clearness, but in so doing, he, necessarily, lost sight of the matter as a whole. Thus there is such a thing as being too profound. Truth is not always in a well. In fact, as regards the more important knowledge, I do believe that she is invariably superficial. The depth lies in the valleys where we seek her, and not upon the mountain-top where she is found.

"The modes and sources of this kind of error are well typified in the contemplation of the heavenly bodies. To look at a star by glances—to view it in a sidelong way, by turning toward it the exterior portions of the retina (more susceptible of feeble impressions of light than the interior), is to behold the star distinctly—is to have the best appreciation of its lustre—a lustre which grows dim just in proportion as we turn our vision *fully* upon it. A greater number of rays actually fall upon the eye in the latter case, but, in the former, there is the more refined capacity for comprehension. By undue profundity we perplex and enfeeble thought; and it is possible to make even Venus herself vanish from the firmament by a scrutiny too sustained, too concentrated, or too direct.

"As for these murders, let us enter into some examinations for ourselves, before we make up an opinion respecting them. An inquiry will afford us amusement" [I thought this an odd term, so applied, but said nothing], "and, besides, Le Bon once rendered me a service for which I am not ungrateful. We will go and see the premises with our own eyes. I know G——, the Prefect of Police, and shall have no difficulty in obtaining the necessary permission."

The permission was obtained, and we proceeded at once to the Rue Morgue. This is one of those miserable thoroughfares which intervene between the Rue Richelieu and the Rue St. Roch. It was late in the afternoon when we reached it, as this quarter is at a great distance from that in which we resided. The house was readily found, for there were still many persons

gazing up at the closed shutters, with an objectless curiosity, from the opposite side of the way. It was an ordinary Parisian house, with a gateway, on one side of which was a glazed watch-box, with a sliding panel in the window, indicating a *loge de concierge*. Before going in we walked up the street, turned down an alley, and then, again turning, passed in the rear of the building—Dupin, meanwhile, examining the whole neighbourhood, as well as the house, with a minuteness of attention for which I could see no possible object.

Retracing our steps, we came again to the front of the dwelling, rang, and having shown our credentials, were admitted by the agents in charge. We went upstairs—into the chamber where the body of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye had been found, and where both the deceased still lay. The disorders of the room had, as usual, been suffered to exist. I saw nothing beyond what had been stated in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*. Dupin scrutinized everything—not excepting the bodies of the victims. We then went into the other rooms, and into the yard; a gendarme accompanying us throughout. The examination occupied us until dark, when we took our departure. On our way home my companion stepped in for a moment at the office of a daily paper.

¶

I HAVE said that the whims of my friend were manifold, and that *Je les ménagais*—for this phrase there is no English equivalent. It was his humour, now, to decline all conversation on the subject of the murders, until about noon the next day. He then asked me if I had observed anything *peculiar* at the scene of the atrocity.

There was something in his manner of emphasizing the word "peculiar," which caused me to shudder, without knowing why.

"No, nothing *peculiar*," I said; "nothing more, at least, than we both saw stated in the paper."

"The *Gazette*," he replied, "has not entered, I fear, into the unusual horror of the thing. But dismiss the idle opinions of this print. It appears to me that this mystery is considered insoluble, for the very reason which should cause it to be regarded as easy of solution—I mean for the *outré* character of its features. The police are confounded by the seeming absence of motive—not for the murder itself—but for the atrocity of the murder. They are puzzled, too, by the seeming impossibility of reconciling the voices heard in contention, with the facts that no one was discovered upstairs but the assassinated Mademoiselle L'Espanaye, and that there were no means of egress without the notice of the party ascending.

"The wild disorder of the room; the corpse thrust, with the head downward, up the chimney; the frightful mutilation of the body of the old lady; these considerations, with those just mentioned, and others which I need not mention, have sufficed to paralyse the powers, by putting completely at fault the boasted acumen of the government agents. They have fallen into the gross but common error of confounding the unusual with the abstruse. But it is by these deviations from the plane of the ordinary, that reason feels its way, if at all, in its search for the true. In investigations such as we are now pursuing, it should not be so much asked 'what has occurred?' as 'what has occurred that has never occurred before?' In fact, the facility with which I shall arrive, or have arrived, at the solution of this mystery, is in the direct ratio of its apparent insolubility in the eyes of the police."

I stared at the speaker in mute astonishment.

"I am now awaiting," continued he, looking toward the door of our apartment—"I am now awaiting a person who, although perhaps not the perpetrator of these butcheries, must have been in some measure implicated in their perpetration. Of the worst portion of the crimes committed, it is probable that he is innocent. I hope that I am right in this supposition; for upon it I build my expectation of reading the entire riddle. I look for the man here—in this room—every moment. It is true that he may not arrive; but the probability is that he will. Should he come, it will be necessary to detain him. Here are pistols; and we both know how to use them when occasion demands their use."

I took the pistols, scarcely knowing what I did, or believing what I heard, while Dupin went on, very much as if in a soliloquy. I have already spoken of his abstract manner at such times. His discourse was addressed to myself; but his voice, although by no means loud, had that intonation which is commonly employed in speaking to someone at a great distance. His eyes, vacant in expression, regarded only the wall.

"That the voices heard in contention," he said, "by the party upon the stairs, were not the voices of the women themselves, was fully proved by the evidence. This relieves us of all doubt upon the question whether the old lady could have first destroyed the daughter, and afterward have committed suicide. I speak of this point chiefly for the sake of method; for the strength of Madame L'Espanaye would have been utterly unequal to the task of thrusting her daughter's corpse up the chimney as it was found; and the nature of the wounds upon her own person entirely precludes the idea of self-destruction. Murder, then, has been committed by some third party; and the voices of this third party were those heard in contention. Let me now advert—not to the whole testimony respecting these voices—but to what was *peculiar* in that testimony. Did you observe anything peculiar about it?"

I remarked that, while all the witnesses agreed in supposing the gruff voice to be that of a Frenchman, there was much disagreement in regard to the shrill, or, as one individual termed it, the harsh voice.

"That was the evidence itself," said Dupin, "but it was not the peculiarity of the evidence. You have observed nothing distinctive. Yet there *was* something to be observed. The witnesses, as you remark, agreed about the gruff voice; they were here unanimous. But in regard to the shrill voice, the peculiarity is—not that they disagreed—but that, while an Italian, an Englishman, a Spaniard, a Hollander, and a Frenchman attempted to describe it, each one spoke of it as that *of a foreigner*. Each is sure that it was not the voice of one of his own countrymen. Each likens it—not to the voice of an individual of any nation with whose language he is conversant—but the converse. The Frenchman supposes it the voice of a Spaniard, and 'might have distinguished some words *had he been acquainted with the Spanish*.' The Dutchman maintains it to have been that of a Frenchman; but we find it stated that, '*not understanding French, this witness was examined through an interpreter*.' The Englishman thinks it the voice of a German, and '*does not understand German*.' The Spaniard 'is sure' that it was that of an Englishman, but 'judges by the intonation' altogether, '*as he has no knowledge of the English*.'

The Italian believes it the voice of a Russian, but '*has never conversed with a native of Russia*.' A second Frenchman differs, moreover, with the first, and is positive that the voice was that of an Italian; but *not being cognizant of that tongue*, is, like the Spaniard, 'convinced by the intonation.' Now, how strangely unusual must that voice have really been, about which such testimony as this *could* have been elicited!—in whose *tones*, even, denizens of the five great divisions of Europe could recognize nothing familiar! You will say that it might have been the voice of an Asiatic—of an African. Neither Asiatics nor Africans abound in Paris; but, without denying the inference, I will now merely call your attention to three points. The voice is termed by one witness 'harsh rather than shrill.' It is represented by two others to have been 'quick and *unequal*.' No words—no sounds resembling words—were by any witness mentioned as distinguishable.

"I know not," continued Dupin, "what impression I may have made, so far, upon your own understanding; but I do not hesitate to say that legitimate deductions even from this portion of the testimony—the portion respecting the gruff and shrill voices—are in themselves sufficient to engender a suspicion which should give direction to all further progress in the investigation of the mystery. I said 'legitimate deductions'; but my meaning is not thus fully expressed. I designed to imply that the deductions are the *sole* proper ones, and that the suspicion arises *inevitably* from them as the single result. What the suspicion is, however, I will not say just yet. I merely wish you to bear in mind that, with myself, it was sufficiently forcible to give a definite form—a certain tendency—to my inquiries in the chamber.

"Let us now transport ourselves, in fancy, to this chamber. What shall we first seek here? The means of egress employed by the murderers. It is not too much to say that neither of us believe in preternatural events. Madame and Mademoiselle L'Espanaye were not destroyed by spirits. The doers of the deed were material, and escaped materially. Then how? Fortunately, there is but one mode of reasoning upon the point, and that mode *must* lead us to a definite decision. Let us examine, each by each, the possible means of egress. It is clear that the assassins were in the room where Mademoiselle L'Espanaye was found,

or at least in the room adjoining, when the party ascended the stairs. It is, then, only from these two apartments that we have to seek issues. The police have laid bare the floors, the ceilings, and the masonry of the walls, in every direction. No *secret* issues could have escaped their vigilance. But, not trusting to *their* eyes, I examined with my own. There were, then, *no* secret issues. Both doors leading from the rooms into the passage were securely locked, with the keys inside. Let us turn to the chimneys. These, although of ordinary width for some eight or ten feet above the hearths, will not admit, throughout their extent, the body of a large cat. The impossibility of egress, by means already stated, being thus absolute, we are reduced to the windows. Through those of the front room no one could have escaped without notice from the crowd in the street. The murderers *must* have passed, then, through those of the back room. Now, brought to this conclusion in so unequivocal a manner as we are, it is not our part, as reasoners, to reject it on account of apparent impossibilities. It is only left for us to prove that these apparent 'impossibilities' are, in reality, not such.

"There are two windows in the chamber. One of them is unobstructed by furniture, and is wholly visible. The lower portion of the other is hidden from view by the head of the unwieldy bedstead which is thrust close up against it. The former was found securely fastened from within. It resisted the utmost force of those who endeavoured to raise it. A large gimlet hole had been pierced in its frame to the left, and a very stout nail was found fitted therein, nearly to the head. Upon examining the other window, a similar nail was seen similarly fitted in it; and a vigorous attempt to raise this sash failed also. The police were now entirely satisfied that egress had not been in these directions. And, *therefore*, it was thought a matter of supererogation to withdraw the nails and open the windows.

"My own examination was somewhat more particular, and was so for the reason I have just given—because here it was, I knew, that all apparent impossibilities *must* be proved to be not such in reality.

"I proceeded to think thus—*à posteriori*. The murderers *did* escape from one of these windows. This being so, they could not have re-fastened the sashes from the inside, as they were found fastened—the consideration which put a stop, through its obviousness, to the scrutiny of the police in this quarter. Yet the sashes *were* fastened. They *must*, then, have the power of fastening themselves. There was no escape from this conclusion. I stepped to the unobstructed casement, withdrew the nail with some difficulty, and attempted to raise the sash. It resisted all my efforts, as I had anticipated. A concealed spring must, I now knew, exist; and this corroboration of my idea convinced me that my premises, at least, were correct, however mysterious still appeared the circumstances attending the nails. A careful search soon brought to light the hidden spring. I pressed it, and, satisfied with the discovery, forbore to upraise the sash.

"I now replaced the nail and regarded it attentively. A person passing out through this window might have reclosed it, and the spring would have caught—but the nail could not have been replaced. The conclusion was plain, and again narrowed in the field of my investigations. The assassins *must* have escaped through the other window. Supposing, then, the springs upon each sash to be the same, as was probable, there *must* be found a difference between the nails, or at least between the modes of their fixture. Getting upon the sacking of the bedstead, I looked over the head-board minutely at the second casement. Passing my hand down behind the board, I readily discovered and pressed the spring, which was, as I had supposed, identical in character with its neighbour. I now looked at the nail. It was as stout as the other, and apparently fitted in the same manner—driven in nearly up to the head.

"You will say that I was puzzled; but, if you think so, you must have misunderstood the nature of the inductions. To use a sporting phrase, I had not been once 'at fault.' The scent had never for an instant been lost. There was no flaw in any link of the chain. I had traced the secret to its ultimate result—and that result was *the nail*. It had, I say, in every respect, the appearance of its fellow in the other window; but this fact was an absolute nullity (conclusive as it might seem to be) when compared with the consideration that here, at this point, terminated the clew. 'There *must* be something wrong,' I said, 'about the nail.' I touched it; and the head, with about a quarter of an inch of the shank, came off in my fingers. The rest of the shank was in the gimlet hole, where it had been

broken off. The fracture was an old one (for its edges were incrusted with rust), and had apparently been accomplished by the blow of a hammer, which had partially embedded, in the top of the bottom sash, the head portion of the nail. I now carefully replaced this head portion in the indentation whence I had taken it, and the resemblance to a perfect nail was complete—the fissure was invisible. Pressing the spring, I gently raised the sash for a few inches; the head went up with it, remaining firm in its bed. I closed the window, and the semblance of the whole nail was again perfect.

"The riddle, so far, was now unriddled. The assassin had escaped through the window which looked upon the bed. Dropping of its own accord upon his exit (or perhaps purposely closed), it had become fastened by the spring; and it was the retention of this spring which had been mistaken by the police for that of the nail—further inquiry being thus considered unnecessary.

"The next question is that of the mode of descent. Upon this point I had been satisfied in my walk with you around the building. About five feet and a half from the casement in question there runs a lightning-rod. From this rod it would have been impossible for anyone to reach the window itself, to say nothing of entering it. I observed, however, that the shutters of the fourth story were of the peculiar kind called by Parisian carpenters *ferrades*—a kind rarely employed at the present day, but frequently seen upon very old mansions at Lyons and Bordeaux. They are in the form of an ordinary door (a single, not a folding door), except that the lower half is latticed or worked in open trellis—thus affording an excellent hold for the hands. In the present instance these shutters are fully three feet and a half broad. When we saw them from the rear of the house, they were both about half open—that is to say, they stood off at right angles from the wall. It is probable that the police, as well as myself, examined the back of the tenement; but, if so, in looking at these *ferrades* in the line of their breadth (as they must have done), they did not perceive this great breadth itself, or, at all events, failed to take it into due consideration.

"In fact, having once satisfied themselves that no egress could have been made in this quarter, they would naturally bestow here a very cursory examination. It was clear to me, however, that the shutter belonging to the window at the head of the bed, would, if swung fully back to the wall, reach to within two feet of the lightning-rod. It was also evident that, by exertion of a very unusual degree of activity and courage, an entrance into the window, from the rod, might have been thus effected. By reaching to the distance of two feet and a half (we now suppose the shutter open to its whole extent) a robber might have taken a firm grasp upon the trellis-work. Letting go, then, his hold upon the rod, placing his feet securely against the wall, and springing boldly from it, he might have swung the shutter so as to close it, and, if we imagine the window open at the time, might even have swung himself into the room.

"I wish you to bear especially in mind that I have spoken of a *very* unusual degree of activity as requisite to success in so hazardous and so difficult a feat. It is my design to show you, first, that the thing might possibly have been accomplished; but, secondly and *chiefly*, I wish to impress upon your understanding the *very extraordinary*—the almost preternatural character of that agility which could have accomplished it.

"You will say, no doubt, using the language of the law, that 'to make out my case,' I should rather undervalue, than insist upon a full estimation of the activity required in this matter. This may be the practice in law, but it is not the usage of reason. My ultimate object is only the truth. My immediate purpose is to lead you to place in juxtaposition, that *very unusual* activity of which I have just spoken, with that *very peculiar* shrill (or harsh) and *unequal* voice, about whose nationality no two persons could be found to agree."

¶

AT these words a vague and half-formed conception of the meaning of Dupin flitted over my mind. I seemed to be upon the verge of comprehension, without power to comprehend—as men, at times, find themselves upon the brink of remembrance, without being able in the end to remember. My friend went on with his discourse.

"You will see," he said, "that I have shifted the question from the mode of egress to that of ingress. It was my design to convey the idea that both were effected in the same manner, at the same point. Let us now revert to the interior of the room.

Let us survey the appearances here. The drawers of the bureau, it is said, had been rifled, although many articles of apparel still remained within them. The conclusion here is absurd. It is a mere guess—a very silly one—and no more. How are we to know that the articles found in the drawers were not all these drawers had originally contained? Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter lived an exceedingly retired life—saw no company—seldom went out—had little use for numerous changes of habiliment. Those found were at least of as good quality as any likely to be possessed by these ladies.

"If a thief had taken any, why did he not take the best—why did he not take all? In a word, why did he abandon four thousand francs in gold to encumber himself with a bundle of linen? The gold *was* abandoned. Nearly the whole sum mentioned by Monsieur Mignaud, the banker, was discovered, in bags, upon the floor. I wish you, therefore, to discard from your thoughts the blundering idea of *motive*, engendered in the brains of the police by that portion of the evidence which speaks of money delivered at the door of the house. Coincidences ten times as remarkable as this (the delivery of the money, and murder committed within three days upon the party receiving it), happen to all of us every hour of our lives, without attracting even momentary notice. Coincidences, in general, are great stumbling-blocks in the way of that class of thinkers who have been educated to know nothing of the theory of probabilities—that theory to which the most glorious objects of human research are indebted for the most glorious of illustration. In the present instance, had the gold been gone, the fact of its delivery three days before would have formed something more than a coincidence. It would have been corroborative of this idea of motive. But, under the real circumstances of the case, if we are to suppose gold the motive of this outrage, we must also imagine the perpetrator so vacillating an idiot as to have abandoned his gold and his motive together.

"Keeping now steadily in mind the points to which I have drawn your attention—that peculiar voice, that unusual agility, and that startling absence of motive in a murder so singularly atrocious as this—let us glance at the butchery itself. Here is a woman strangled to death by manual strength, and thrust up a chimney, head downward. Ordinary assassins employ no such modes of murder as this. Least of all, do they thus dispose of the murdered. In the manner of thrusting the corpse up the chimney, you will admit that there was something *excessively outré*—something altogether irreconcilable with our common notions of human action, even when we suppose the actors the most depraved of men. Think, too, how great must have been that strength which could have thrust the body *up* such an aperture so forcibly that the united vigour of several persons was found barely sufficient to drag it *down!*

"Turn, now, to other indications of the employment of a vigour most marvellous. On the hearth were thick tresses—very thick tresses—of grey, human hair. These had been torn out by the roots. You are aware of the great force necessary in tearing thus from the head even twenty or thirty hairs together. You saw the locks in question as well as myself. Their roots (a hideous sight!) were clotted with fragments of the flesh of the scalp—sure token of the prodigious power which had been exerted in uprooting perhaps half a million hairs at a time. The throat of the old lady was not merely cut, but the head absolutely severed from the body: the instrument was a mere razor. I wish you also to look at the *brutal* ferocity of these deeds. Of the bruises upon the body of Madame L'Espanaye I do not speak. Monsieur Dumas, and his worthy coadjutor Monsieur Etienne, have pronounced that they were inflicted by some obtuse instrument; and so far these gentlemen are very correct. The obtuse instrument was clearly the stone pavement in the yard, upon which the victim had fallen from the window which looked in upon the bed. This idea, however simple it may now seem, escaped the police for the same reason that the breadth of the shutters escaped them—because, by the affair of the nails, their perceptions had been hermetically sealed against the possibility of the windows having ever been opened at all.

"If now, in addition to all these things, you have properly reflected upon the odd disorder of the chamber, we have gone so far as to combine the ideas of an agility astounding, a strength superhuman, a ferocity brutal, a butchery without motive, a *grotesquerie* in horror absolutely alien from humanity, and a voice foreign in tone to the ears of men of many nations, and devoid of all distinct or intelligible syllabification.

What result, then, has ensued? What impression have I made upon your fancy?"

I felt a creeping of the flesh as Dupin asked me the question. "A madman," I said, "has done this deed—some raving maniac escaped from a neighbouring *Maison de Santé*."

"In some respects," he replied, "your idea is not irrelevant. But the voices of madmen, even in their wildest paroxysms, are never found to tally with that peculiar voice heard upon the stairs. Madmen are of some nation, and their language, however incoherent in its words, has always the coherence of syllabification. Besides, the hair of a madman is not such as I now hold in my hand. I disentangled this little tuft from the rigidly clutched fingers of Madame L'Espanaye. Tell me what you can make of it."

"Dupin," I said, completely unnerved; "this hair is most unusual—this is no *human* hair."

"I have not asserted that it is," said he; "but, before we decide this point, I wish you to glance at the little sketch I have here traced upon this paper. It is a *fac-simile* drawing of what has been described in one portion of the testimony as 'dark bruises, deep indentations of finger nails,' upon the throat of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye, and in another (by Messrs. Dumas and Etienne), as a 'series of livid spots, evidently the impression of fingers.'

"You will perceive," continued my friend, spreading out the paper upon the table before us, "that this drawing gives the idea of a firm and fixed hold. There is no *slipping* apparent. Each finger has retained—possibly until the death of the victim—the fearful grasp by which it originally embedded itself. Attempt, now, to place all your fingers, at the same time, in the respective impressions as you see them."

I made the attempt in vain.

"We are possibly not giving this matter a fair trial," he said. "The paper is spread out upon a plane surface; but the human throat is cylindrical. Here is a billet of wood, the circumference of which is about that of the throat. Wrap the drawing round it, and try the experiment again."

I did so; but the difficulty was even more obvious than before. "This," I said, "is the mark of no human hand."

"Read now," replied Dupin, "this passage from Cuvier."

It was a minute anatomical and generally descriptive account of the large fulvous Ourang-Outang of the East Indian Islands. The gigantic stature, the prodigious strength and activity, the wild ferocity, and the imitative propensities of these mammalia are sufficiently well known to all. I understood the full horrors of the murder at once.

"The description of the digits," said I, as I made an end of reading, "is in exact accordance with this drawing. I see that no animal but an Ourang-Outang, of the species here mentioned, could have impressed the indentations as you have traced them. This tuft of tawny hair, too, is identical in character with that of the beast of Cuvier. But I cannot possibly comprehend the particulars of this frightful mystery. Besides, there were *two* voices heard in contention, and one of them was unquestionably the voice of a Frenchman."

"True; and you will remember an expression attributed almost unanimously, by the evidence, to this voice—the expression '*Mon Dieu!*' This, under the circumstances, has been justly characterized by one of the witnesses (Montani, the confectioner) as an expression of remonstrance or expostulation. Upon these two words, therefore, I have mainly built my hopes of a full solution of the riddle. A Frenchman was cognizant of the murder. It is possible—indeed it is far more than probable—that he was innocent of all participation in the bloody transactions which took place. The Ourang-Outang may have escaped from him. He may have traced it to the chamber, but, under the agitating circumstances which ensued, he could never have recaptured it. It is still at large. I will not pursue these guesses—for I have no right to call them more—since the shades of reflection upon which they are based are scarcely of sufficient depth to be appreciable to my own intellect, and since I could not pretend to make them intelligible to the understanding of another. We will call them guesses, then, and speak of them as such. If the Frenchman in question is indeed, as I suppose, innocent of this atrocity, this advertisement, which I left last night, upon our return home, at the office of *Le Monde* (a paper devoted to the shipping interest, and much sought by sailors), will bring him to our residence."

He handed me a paper, and I read thus:

"CAUGHT—*In the Bois de Boulogne, early in the morning of the ——inst.* [the morning

of the murder], *a very large, tawny Ourang-Outang of the Bornese species. The owner (who is ascertained to be a sailor, belonging to a Maltese vessel), may have the animal again, upon identifying it satisfactorily, and paying a few charges arising from its capture and keeping. Call at No. ——, Rue ——, Faubourg St. Germain—au troisième.*"

"How was it possible," I asked, "that you should know the man to be a sailor, and belonging to a Maltese vessel?"

"I do *not* know it," said Dupin. "I am not *sure* of it. Here, however, is a small piece of ribbon, which from its form, and from its greasy appearance, has evidently been used in tying the hair in one of those long *queues* of which sailors are so fond. Moreover, this knot is one which few besides sailors can tie, and is peculiar to the Maltese. I picked the ribbon up at the foot of the lightning-rod. It could not have belonged to either of the deceased. Now if, after all, I am wrong in my induction from this ribbon, that the Frenchman was a sailor belonging to a Maltese vessel, still I can have done no harm in saying what I did in the advertisement. If I am in error, he will merely suppose that I have been misled by some circumstance into which he will not take the trouble to inquire. But if I am right, a great point is gained.

"Cognizant, although innocent of the murder, the Frenchman will naturally hesitate about replying to the advertisement—about demanding the Ourang-Outang. He will reason thus: 'I am innocent; I am poor; my Ourang-Outang is of great value—to one in my circumstances a fortune of itself—why should I lose it through idle apprehensions of danger? Here it is within my grasp. It was found in the Bois de Boulogne—at a vast distance from the scene of that butchery. How can it ever be suspected that a brute beast should have done the deed? The police are at fault—they have failed to procure the slightest clew. Should they even trace the animal, it would be impossible to prove me cognizant of the murder, or to implicate me in guilt on account of that cognizance. Above all, *I am known*. The advertiser designates me as the possessor of the beast. I am not sure to what limit his knowledge may extend. Should I avoid claiming a property of so great value, which it is known that I possess, I will render the animal at least liable to suspicion. It is not my policy to attract attention, either to myself or to the beast. I will answer the advertisement, get the Ourang-Outang, and keep it close until this matter has blown over.'"

At this moment we heard a step upon the stairs.

"Be ready," said Dupin, "with your pistols, but neither use them nor show them until at a signal from myself."

¶

THE front door of the house had been left open, and the visitor had entered, without ringing, and advanced several steps upon the staircase. Now, however, he seemed to hesitate. Presently we heard him descending. Dupin was moving quickly to the door, when we again heard him coming up. He did not turn back a second time, but stepped up with decision, and rapped at the door.

"Come in," said Dupin, in a cheerful and hearty tone.

A man entered. He was a sailor, evidently—a tall, stout, and muscular-looking person, with a certain, dare-devil expression of countenance, not altogether unprepossessing. His face, greatly sunburnt, was more than half hidden by whisker and mustachio. He had with him a huge, oaken cudgel, but appeared to be otherwise unarmed. He bowed awkwardly, and bade us "good evening," in French accents, which, although somewhat Neufchatelish, were still sufficiently indicative of a Parisian origin.

"Sit down, my friend," said Dupin. "I suppose you have called about the Ourang-Outang. Upon my word, I almost envy you the possession of him; a remarkably fine, and no doubt a very valuable animal. How old do you suppose him to be?"

The sailor drew a long breath, with the air of a man relieved of some intolerable burden, and then replied:

"I have no way of telling—but he can't be more than four or five years old. Have you got him here?"

"Oh, no; we had no conveniences for keeping him here. He is at a livery stable in the Rue Dubourg, just by. You can get him in the morning. Of course you are prepared to identify the property?"

"To be sure I am, sir."

"I shall be sorry to part with him," said Dupin.

"I don't mean that you should be at all this trouble for nothing, sir," said the man. "Couldn't expect it. Am very willing to pay a reward for the finding of the animal—that is to say, anything in reason."

"Well," replied my friend, "that is all very fair, to be sure. Let me think!—what should I have? Oh! I will tell you. My reward shall be this. You shall give me all the information in your power about these murders in the Rue Morgue."

Dupin said the last words in a very low tone, and very quietly. Just as quietly, too, he walked toward the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. He then drew a pistol from his bosom, and placed it, without the least flurry, upon the table.

The sailor's face flushed up as if he were struggling with suffocation. He started to his feet and grasped his cudgel; but the next moment he fell back into his seat, trembling violently, and with the countenance of death itself. He spoke not a word. I pitied him from the bottom of my heart.

"My friend," said Dupin, in a kind tone, "you are alarming yourself unnecessarily—you are indeed. We mean you no harm whatever. I pledge you the honour of a gentleman, and of a Frenchman, that we intend you no injury. I perfectly well know that you are innocent of the atrocities in the Rue Morgue. It will not do, however, to deny that you are in some measure implicated in them. From what I have already said, you must know that I have had means of information about this matter—means of which you could never have dreamed. Now the thing stands thus. You have done nothing which you could have avoided—nothing, certainly, which renders you culpable. You were not even guilty of robbery, when you might have robbed with impunity. You have nothing to conceal. You have no reason for concealment. On the other hand, you are bound by every principle of honour to confess all you know. An innocent man is now imprisoned, charged with that crime of which you can point out the perpetrator."

The sailor had recovered his presence of mind, in a great measure, while Dupin uttered these words; but his original boldness of bearing was all gone.

"So help me God," said he, after a brief pause, "I *will* tell you all I know about this affair; but I do not expect you to believe one half I say—I would be a fool indeed if I did. Still, I *am* innocent, and I will make a clean breast if I die for it."

What he stated was, in substance, this. He had lately made a voyage to the Indian Archipelago. A party, of which he formed one, landed at Borneo, and passed into the interior on an excursion of pleasure. Himself and a companion had captured the Ourang-Outang. This companion dying, the animal fell into his own exclusive possession. After great trouble, occasioned by the intractable ferocity of his captive during the home voyage, he at length succeeded in lodging it safely at his own residence in Paris, where, not to attract toward himself the unpleasant curiosity of his neighbours, he kept it carefully secluded, until such time as it should recover from a wound in the foot, received from a splinter on board ship. His ultimate design was to sell it.

Returning home from some sailors' frolic on the night, or rather in the morning of the murder, he found the beast occupying his own bedroom, into which it had broken from a closet adjoining, where it had been, as was thought, securely confined. Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking-glass, attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had, no doubt, previously watched its master through the key-hole of the closet. Terrified at the sight of so dangerous a weapon in the possession of an animal so ferocious, and so well able to use it, the man, for some moments, was at a loss what to do. He had been accustomed, however, to quiet the creature, even in its fiercest moods, by the use of a whip, and to this he now resorted. Upon sight of it, the Ourang-Outang sprang at once through the door of the chamber, down the stairs, and thence, through an open window into the street.

The Frenchman followed in despair; the ape, razor still in hand, occasionally stopping to look back and gesticulate at its pursuer, until the latter had nearly come up with it. It then again made off. In this manner the chase continued for a long time. The streets were profoundly quiet, as it was nearly three o'clock in the morning. In passing down an alley in the rear of the Rue Morgue, the fugitive's attention was arrested by a light gleaming from the open window of Madame L'Espanaye's chamber, in the fourth story of her house. Rushing to the building, it perceived the lightning-rod, clambered up with inconceivable agility, grasped the shutter, which was thrown fully back against the wall, and, by its means, swung itself directly upon the headboard of the bed. The whole feat did not occupy a minute. The shutter was kicked open again by the Ourang-Outang as it entered the room.

The sailor, in the meantime, was both rejoiced and perplexed. He had strong hopes of now recapturing the brute, as it could scarcely escape from the trap into which it had ventured, except by the rod, where it might be intercepted as it came down. On the other hand, there was much cause for anxiety as to what it might do in the house. This latter reflection urged the man still to follow the fugitive. A lightning-rod is ascended without difficulty, especially by a sailor; but, when he had arrived as high as the window, which lay far to his left, his career was stopped; the most that he could accomplish was to reach over so as to obtain a glimpse of the interior of the room. At this glimpse he nearly fell from his hold through excess of horror. Now it was that those hideous shrieks arose upon the night, which had startled from slumber the inmates of the Rue Morgue. Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter, habited in their night clothes, had apparently been occupied in arranging some papers in the iron chest already mentioned, which had been wheeled into the middle of the room. It was open, and its contents lay beside it on the floor. The victims must have been sitting with their backs toward the window; and, from the time elapsing between the ingress of the beast and the screams, it seems probable that it was not immediately perceived. The flapping-to of the shutter would have been attributed to the wind.

As the sailor looked in, the gigantic animal had seized Madame L'Espanaye by the hair (which was loose, as she had been combing it), and was flourishing the razor about her face, in imitation of the motions of a barber. The daughter lay prostrate and motionless; she had swooned. The screams and struggles of the old lady (during which the hair was torn from her head) had the effect of changing the probably pacific purposes of the Ourang-Outang into those of wrath. With one determined sweep of its muscular arm it nearly severed her head from her body. The sight of blood inflamed its anger into frenzy. Gnashing its teeth, and flashing fire from its eyes, it flew upon the body of the girl, and embedded its fearful talons in her throat, retaining its grasp until she expired. Its wandering and wild glances fell, at this moment, upon the head of the bed, over which the face of its master, rigid with horror, was just discernible. The fury of the beast, who no doubt bore still in mind the dreaded whip, was instantly converted into fear. Conscious of having deserved punishment, it seemed desirous of concealing its bloody deeds, and skipped about the chamber in an agony of nervous agitation; throwing down and breaking the furniture as it moved, and dragging the bed from the bedstead. In conclusion, it seized first the corpse of the daughter, and thrust it up the chimney, as it was found; then that of the old lady, which it immediately hurled through the window headlong.

As the ape approached the casement with its mutilated burden, the sailor shrank aghast to the rod, and rather gliding than clambering down it, hurried at once home—dreading the consequences of the butchery, and gladly abandoning, in his terror, all solicitude about the fate of the Ourang-Outang. The words heard by the party upon the staircase were the Frenchman's exclamations of horror and affright, commingled with the fiendish jabberings of the brute.

I have scarcely anything to add. The Ourang-Outang must have escaped from the chamber, by the rod, just before the breaking of the door. It must have closed the window as it passed through it. It was subsequently caught by the owner himself, who obtained for it a very large sum at the *Jardin des Plantes*. Le Bon was instantly released upon our narration of the circumstances (with some comments from Dupin) at the bureau of the Prefect of Police. This functionary, however well disposed to my friend, could not altogether conceal his chagrin at the turn which affairs had taken, and was fain to indulge in a sarcasm or two.

"Let him talk," said Dupin, who had not thought it necessary to reply. "Let him discourse; it will ease his conscience. I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle. Nevertheless, that he failed in the solution of this mystery is by no means that matter for wonder which he supposes it; for, in truth, our friend the Prefect is somewhat too cunning to be profound. In his wisdom is no *stamen*. It is all head and no body, like the pictures of the goddess Laverna—or, at best, all head and shoulders, like a codfish. But he is a good creature after all. I like him especially for one master-stroke of cant, by which he has attained his reputation for ingenuity. I mean the way he has '*de nier ce qui est, et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas.*'"

(*Another great mystery story next month*)

His First Appearance as a Juryman

A medley of actions and an unexpected reaction

By RICHARD MARSH

HE came into the shop just as I was trimming a loin of mutton, began fumbling in his breast pocket, took out a blue paper, and laid it down on the block right in front of me. I cannot say I liked the look of it; or of him either.

"There's a wearing-your-faces for you," he said.

"A what?" I asked. I hadn't the faintest notion of what he meant; though to my mind there's always a connexion between blue papers and trouble.

"A summons."

"A summons!"

I went hot all over. Almost dropped my knife; not to speak of the mutton.

"To attend the County Court."

"You don't mean to say that that old Tibbetts——"

My thoughts flew to the four and ninepence which old Tibbetts is always threatening to County Court me for; though I never owed it him, and well he knows it. But this party put up his hand and stopped me.

"Don't commit yourself. I don't want to know anything about your private affairs, Mr. Dunn. Especially as you've got hold of the wrong end of the stick. This is a summons to attend the County Court in the character of a juryman. It isn't often that we do have a jury case; which is the more reason, when we do, why we like to have as fine, as intelligent, as hard-headed, as practical, as superior a person on it as we can get. Therefore, as an officer of the court, and having heard your name mentioned in certain circles, when this case cropped up, I naturally thought of you. The more particularly as it happens to be an unusually complicated and exceedingly delicate case. Which explains why I have now served you with this wearing-your-faces, which, in the profession, is a legal term for what the law of England calls a jury-process."

Whether he was or was not making game of me I don't know to this hour. He was a smooth-faced vagabond, with a tongue equal to a dozen of mine. What with my relief at finding old Tibbetts hadn't gone to extremities, and the way he buttered me up, I presented him with two shillings for himself, and a nice piece of steak into the bargain, before he left my shop. I'm not altogether happy when I think of it.

Still, on the whole I felt that I had been paid a compliment. Not that I could make much of the summons itself. From what he said it seemed that there were two cases, and I was to try them both—Cockburn versus Flather, and Flather versus Cockburn. "Cross actions" he called them. First Cockburn sued Flather and then Flather sued Cockburn. I can't say I know much about the law; and, as far as that goes, I don't want to know much either; but my becoming a public character like that showed that I was getting known in the neighbourhood, and that was something. I hadn't long set up on my own account, and was only in a small way of business, so that the more I did get known the better pleased I should be. I only had a young lad to help me, and as he couldn't even cut a steak what I call decently, I didn't quite see how I was going to leave him in charge of the shop perhaps the whole day. But that I should have to manage.

Since, as has been said, advertisement is the breath of a butcher's nostrils, especially when he's beginning, I did mention, just here and there, to one or two persons, that I was about, as it might be called, to serve my country in a public capacity. I thought it just as well to let customers know that in the public eye I was of more importance than they might suppose. Very interested,

as a rule, they seemed to be. I felt pretty sure that the story was all over the neighbourhood before the next day's dinner. Though, before the business was finished, I rather wished it hadn't travelled quite so quickly; nor yet so far.

The evening after I got the summons, as my lad Sam was putting up the shutters, a big man came into the shop, with a red face, a green tie, and a blue cord waistcoat. He wore his hat on the side of his head and spoke with what I should call an Irish accent. He had something under his arm in a piece of paper, and greeted me with a smile which couldn't have been larger if I'd been his long-lost brother.

"Mr. Dunn, I believe—Mr. Augustus Dunn? I'm pleased and proud to make your acquaintance, Mr. Dunn. I'm your neighbour from just over the way. The third turning on the left, the fourth on the right, you go straight on and you're within a stone's throw of me. The Plume of Feathers is my house. I'm the landlord—it's my own child, Mr. Dunn. A free house, tied for no one thing. I'll be proud to see you inside its doors any hour of any day. There's nothing there you shan't put to your lips—at my cost, Mr. Dunn, at my cost. And while I'm talking, will you have the extreme kindness to send round to me at the Plume of Feathers Hotel, to-morrow morning, fifteen loin chops, ten chump chops, and a dozen pounds of steak cut from the best part of the rump. I'll be paying for it now, or when it comes, whichever you please; for I ask credit from no man, and I'll take none either. By the way, could I have half a word with you in private. Are you a married man, Mr. Dunn?"

"Not at present, sir; though I may say that I'm hoping soon to be."

"My congratulations, Mr. Dunn—my heartfelt congratulations. She's a fortunate woman that's got you; and it's very sure I am that a man of your intelligence wouldn't choose a lady that wasn't a credit and an ornament to his home."

He unwrapped the something which he had under his arm.

"I have here, sir, one of the finest drops of whisky you ever saw inside a bottle or tasted out of one. If you've a couple of glasses we'll drink to the lady as is going to be Mrs. Dunn."

I got the glasses while Sam fetched a jug of water, and he drew the cork. I wondered what it was he was after. I never knew anyone so friendly who wasn't after something.

"You're a sportsman, Mr. Dunn; you're a judge of a horse."

I wondered if he wanted to trade one on to me.

"Well—I don't know that I should go so far as that. I know a horse—when I see one."

"You do that, sir—you do more than that. I see it from your build, sir, and from the eye of you—Mr. Dunn, I have the finest pony you ever saw upon four legs. Leastways, he was that until the bolt of a cruel fate blighted his career."

I concluded that pony was for sale. But I was wrong.

"Mr. Dunn, I'm going to tell you a story that will move your tender heart to tears; for it's a tender heart you have, and one which can feel for a neighbour and a friend—for it's a friend I'm going to be to you if ever you had one."

He emptied his glass; and, as he refilled it, sighed.

"It's now some Sundays since I went to Barnet with Limb-o'-the-Devil. Limb-o'-the-Devil, Mr. Dunn, is the affectionate patronymic I have bestowed on one of the best ponies this world has known. It in no way describes his character, which is as milk for mildness, but is just a sportive way I have of talking. As we was going along, before you could say, How far is it across the road? there came one of them bicycles—oh, them bicycles! I'm not a man as wishes harm to no creature, whether living or not; but I could say things about them bicycles as would take the hair right off the top of your head, and then be only just beginning. In less than half a second that bicycle was in us, and through us, and round us, and under us, and on top of us—my gracious! It was awful. Mr. Dunn, the whole civilization of the Barnet Road was thrown in a flummux. I was here, and Limb-o'-the-Devil was there, and the cart was somewhere else, and we were all of a heap, and no one knows where we were. And what happened to me, and what happened to Limb-o'-the-Devil, and what happened to the cart—I'll not dwell on it, it's more than my feelings will stand, for I've never been the same man since. And it's to you I'm looking for justice, Mr. Dunn."

"To me?"

"To you. My name is Flather."

"Flather?"

I knew I had heard the name before; but at the moment I couldn't think where. He eyed me with what I felt was a look of doubt.

"I hope it's not a mistake I've been making."

"I don't know; but—I don't understand."

"I've been informed that you're one of my fellow-citizens who have been appointed to try the action I am bringing for the restoration of what can never be restored."

Then a light flashed on me. In fact, several lights.

"Are you the Flather in Flather against Cockburn?"

"Just that. I am he. No more and no less. And you're one of the jury that's to try it?"

"I am."

"You are. Give me your hand, Mr. Dunn." He took it; there was nothing in the shape of a gift on my part. "I'm wanting the words to tell the pleasure I have in meeting you; for I know that I need only to have one friend upon that jury—one true man, one intelligent creature, one feeling heart, and I'm as sure of my rights as if I had 'em. It's only my rights I'm asking. No more; no more at all. As for that bicycle—if that bicycle gets its rights, or the tenth part of them, funny it will be looking. Now we're getting to business. I'll say nothing of my sufferings, though they're awful; or of what I've lost—which is worse; or of the shock to Limb-o'-the-Devil's nerves—which is worst. Every time he sees a bicycle he stands straight up on his hind legs; and as there's lots of them about you may be guessing what a lively time I have of it when I'm taking him for a quiet drive. But I'll speak of none of these things. I'll only say that I'm a man of property, a man of influence, and, what's more, a man of gratitude. My word goes further round these parts than you might think. I may say that I hold in the hollow of my hand eight or nine sheep and a couple of oxen a week—in the way of your trade I'm meaning. You've only got to tip me the word out of the corner of your eye that when I stand before the jury that's to try the rights and wrongs of it that so far as you're concerned I'll be getting what I'm after and. in the butchering, you're made for life. It's only your promise I'm asking, Mr. Dunn. Not one thing more."

I don't know that I gave him my promise. I'm not quite sure what I did do. He was not a person it was easy to put off with a shuffling answer. For persistence he was bad to beat. He was full of assurance of what he would do for me if I did what he wanted for him; and more than hinted at the disagreeables which might come my way if I didn't. I am perfectly willing to admit that I allowed him to depart with the impression on his mind that if the action wasn't decided in his favour it wouldn't be through any fault of mine.

¶

IN the morning, soon after Sam had opened the shop, up comes Matilda. With her another young lady.

"Hallo, Augustus! I thought we should catch you before business began. This is my cousin Lily, of whom you have heard me speak."

I might have; but I didn't remember. Matilda seemed to have about as many cousins as there are people in the village where I was born. This one was as nice a looking young lady as ever I saw.

"Lily, this is Mr. Dunn. You know who Mr. Dunn is."

Matilda giggled. The young lady smiled. Sam grinned. I made up my mind there and then that Sam should have a lively day of it. But as it happened, for liveliness his day didn't come within a hundred miles of mine.

I showed them into the sitting-room. Matilda began at me at once.

"Augustus, you know I love you."

"Well, Matilda, I believe you do."

"You believe I do? You know I do. Oh, Augustus, how can you say you only believe I do."

"Well, Matilda, I know you do."

"Of course you know I do. And one reason why I love you is because you've such a feeling heart."

"I hope I have as feeling a heart as another man."

"You have. You wouldn't see a worm trampled on for nothing."

"I hope I shouldn't."

"Augustus, look at Lily."

I was looking. I never saw a young lady who was better worth the looking at. Matilda has her points. And her father had promised to give her three hundred

pounds when she married. But beauty was not what you might call her forte. If anyone had asked me I should have said that I shouldn't have thought such looks was in the family.

"She's a worm."

"Well, Matilda, I don't know that I should like— "

"She is a worm. And she's been trampled on. She's a wreck. A perfect wreck. Aren't you, Lily?"

"Yes, Matilda, I am really beginning to be afraid I am."

"She suffers agonies. Don't you, Lily?"

The young lady sighed. It made her look heavenly.

"Ah! no one knows what I suffer!"

"She can hardly sit up straight—can you, Lily?" The young lady shook her head.

"Oh, Matilda, with comfort I can't sit up at all."

Matilda took out her pocket-handkerchief.

"When I think of what she was only a few short weeks ago, and of what she is now, I almost feel as if I could cry my eyes out. Augustus, do you mind Lily lying on your sofa?"

Did I mind? The idea! I was only too delighted. She lay down; and I had the pleasure of assisting her to do so. Such a pair of feet as peeped out of the bottom of her skirt!

"Lily, tell him—all!"

Matilda did speak in such a tone of voice, and the young lady did look so like a faded flower, that I'd half a mind to send Sam out for sixpennyworth of brandy, and offer them a nip. Or even a sip of Mr. Flather's whisky. But at that hour of the morning I didn't know how the offer might be taken. With a young lady you can never tell where you are.

"I don't know, Mr. Dunn, that I have any right to suppose that you are interested in my foolish troubles."

"I'm sure, miss, you do me an injustice. As Matilda here will tell you, I have a feeling heart."

"I'm sure you have. I can see it in your face."

"Can't you, Lily? Didn't I tell you that you could?"

Until Mr. Flather had said so the night before, I didn't know that the thing was quite so plain. From a business point of view I wasn't sure that it wasn't a mistake. A man doesn't want to go about with his feeling heart stuck in the middle of his face.

"A few weeks ago, Mr. Dunn, I was riding on my bicycle."

Something went all over me when she said bicycle.

"A friend had asked me to tea. I thought I would go on my machine. I went along the Barnet Road."

I didn't feel any better when she mentioned the Barnet Road.

"As I was going, thinking of my friend, and what a good time I should have with her, a dreadful man, in a dreadful cart, with a dreadful horse, ran right into me."

"Oh, Lily, my poor, dear darling!"

Matilda rushed to the sofa and kissed her. What I felt, being no penman, I can't describe. I do know that I felt like having a go at Mr. Flather's bottle in the cupboard on my own account.

"I wasn't killed, not altogether, but I was thrown in a heap on the road, and my bicycle was shivered into a hundred pieces." I wondered if she had counted them. But I didn't like to ask. "The man in the cart rode on. He didn't stop to inquire if I was dead. He didn't care. He flew like the wind. If it hadn't been that there were people standing by who recognized him, I should never have known his name unto this hour."

Matilda stood up.

"His name is Flather." I could have told her that.

"And my cousin's name is Lily Cockburn." I could have told her that also. "Now you know why we have come."

I did. At least I guessed it. I had had a call of the kind before. I thought of Mr. Flather. What had I promised him? I wished I hadn't taken the whisky. Confound the chops and steak which he had ordered! I also wished that summons had gone elsewhere. Being a juryman, whether it was good business or not, wasn't the sort of thing I cared for. I always did say that blue papers and trouble went together.

Miss Cockburn came up to me with her hands clasped in front of her. A pretty picture she looked. One that would have moved any man to something more than pity.

"Mr. Dunn, it's only justice that I want."

"That's all," said Matilda.

"I only ask what everyone has a right to ask—even a lonely, unprotected, helpless girl."

"And you see that she gets it, Augustus Dunn!"

"Promise that when I come into that dreadful court, to be stared at by those horrid people, you won't shut your heart against me because I have suffered!"

"He'd better!" said Matilda.

It was the same as with Mr. Flather. I don't know what I promised. At least, not exactly. Though I'm not denying that I might have conveyed a kind of a sort of a general impression that Miss Cockburn might rely on me. I know that Matilda kissed me, and that at her invitation Miss Cockburn kissed me too. And it seems pretty clear that she wouldn't have done that if I hadn't given her to understand that she should have the justice she desired. Though how I was going to manage it I couldn't altogether see.

Not even at the time. And afterwards it was worse. For, as far as I could make out, she was claiming £50 damages, and Mr. Flather was claiming £50 too. Supposing I gave both parties a verdict, I doubted if either would be satisfied. When I sent Mr. Flather round his chops and steak, I was conscious that I was standing on the borders of a precipice. And when I reflected on the invitation I had accepted from Matilda to meet Miss Cockburn the next afternoon at tea, I could not but feel that in that quarter also there might be trouble ahead. I could not but admit that this was one of those cases in which it would be difficult to make myself agreeable to both parties; and that I was treading the path of danger in deluding myself with any impression that I could.

This became clearer to me as time went on.

First a sour-looking female turned up, about fifty-five or fifty-six, who informed me that she was Miss Cockburn's aunt, and hoped that I should do my duty as a man, and that if I did I should have her custom, which, though she was a single woman, seldom came to less than eight or nine shillings a week; and, likewise, through her recommendation, that of all her friends and neighbours. But, if I didn't, I should be hooted by the parish.

Then an individual appeared who informed me he was Mr. Flather's friend, and one of his best customers. He looked it. I'll be bound that the pimples on his face cost him more than I should have cared to spend. While I was weighing for him the knuckle end of a leg of mutton, he mentioned that if I was a wise man I shouldn't hesitate to do for Mr. Flather the little service he required. For while he was a good man to have for a friend, he was a bad one to have for an enemy. I should do an excellent day's work if I got in with him; and the worst I ever did in my life if I didn't.

To add to the feeling of satisfaction which was gradually stealing over me, in the evening my landlord called. He said he had heard that I was going to exercise one of my privileges as a citizen and sit upon a jury. Something prevented me from telling him that I wished I wasn't, though I should have liked to. He added that he was the last person in the world to endeavour to prevent a man entering on his duties, on so important an occasion, with an open and impartial mind. At the same time, he could not refrain from mentioning that one of the parties in the suit was his fellow-countryman and the friend of his boyhood. That was the first time I knew my landlord was Irish. William Flather and he were as one. They were fellow Buffaloes, fellow Oddfellows, fellow Foresters, fellow Masons, and fellow half a dozen other things besides. Who went against William Flather went against him. And with regard to my application to renew my tenancy, while we were on the subject he might mention that he had applications from other quarters. And though he had every friendly feeling towards me, he'd a notion that he'd like to see how things went before he arrived at a decision. Then he winked. And I felt

At Random

PROVERBS are short sentences drawn from long experience.—CERVANTES.

Self-trust is the first secret of success.—EMERSON.

I never think I have hit hard unless it rebounds.—JOHNSON.

The memory strengthens as you lay burdens upon it.—DE QUINCEY.

A pleasant possession is useless without a comrade.—SENECA.

Quarrels would not last long if the wrong were only on one side.—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

bad. Because if I couldn't get a renewal I didn't know where I should find another shop which would suit me half as well. And I knew as well as he did that there was at least one other party who would pretty well give the nose off his face to see himself where I was.

I wished I had taken a lease at first. I also wished that jury had been farther before they put me on it. I began to wonder if I couldn't catch influenza, or pneumonia, or something, the day before. Though I wasn't sure that, even if I did, that would give much satisfaction to anybody either.

¶

THE morning brought two letters. One was from Miss Cockburn, pouring out her soul to me in a way that made me all of a glow. The other was from Matilda, dropping a variety of hints which turned my blood cold. Miss Cockburn remarked that it made her happy to think that for all her hopes of happiness, including a new bicycle, she was dependent upon me. For it needed but a brief acquaintance to show her that in me she had met a man that was a man; and she looked forward more than she could say to improving that acquaintance that afternoon at tea. Matilda observed that for the first time she was putting my affection to the test; and she was sure I knew well enough to be aware that to her, her relations were as herself, and that she could have no love for, or trust in, a person who could *betray*—with three lines underneath—her flesh and blood. But that, she was sure, I would *never*, *never* do.

These letters, sandwiched both together, made me happy. I cut a shoulder of mutton all jagged; scored a loin of pork in a way that was a sight to see; and mixed up mutton suet with beef. I could see I wasn't so far off real illness as I'd fancied.

Something that happened that very afternoon nearly finished me. After that it only wanted the very merest shred to tip the balance.

That was Wednesday—early-closing day. Although I was in such a small way, I had made up my mind from the very first to go in for a high class trade. So, with all the better shops, on Wednesdays I closed at five. That afternoon I had decided to close at half-past four, because I had to be round at Matilda's before six, and Sam wasn't the sort to be trusted with anything. For all he cared the shop might stop open till nine, as he was quite capable of going off and never shutting it at all. The head he had on top of him wasn't equal to a sheep's.

Just as I was going to tell him to get out those shutters, a trap drove up. A dandy little thing—olive-brown, picked out with green, and a bay pony that looked as if it could move between the shafts. Two men were in it. They both got out. One of them called Sam.

"Boy, hold this pony. Mind you do. If you take your hand off his rein he'll be ten miles away before you notice it."

The pair came into my shop. They were both of them tall and broad and big. Each had a straw in his mouth; they were dressed alike, and both had broken noses. If it hadn't been that one had a cast in his right eye and the other something similar in his left, it wouldn't have been easy to tell them apart. They looked at me in a way I didn't understand, and didn't like—as I might have sized a bullock up and down. After they'd had plenty of time to form an opinion of my weight and points, one of them spoke—the one with the cast in his left.

"We're the Bashers; he's Jim, I'm Tim."

As it happened I'd just been reading about the display they'd been giving at the National Sporting Club the night before; two of the finest heavyweights America had ever had. They'd come over to meet anything that we might bring against them. It seemed that we'd nothing that cared to stand against them in a ring. When I looked at them I didn't wonder. Seeming fit as fit could be, I judged that either would have turned the scale at fifteen stone. Their length of arm suggested the reach for which they were famous. Though I wondered what had brought them, the honour of their presence in my shop put me all of a fluster.

"Not *the* Bashers?" I managed to inquire.

"*The* Bashers," replied the one with the cast in his left—who had said he was Tim. "The Fighting Bashers. Ready to fight anyone, anywhere, at any weights, for anything; to a finish, if agreeable." The last time Tim Basher had fought to a finish he had as good as killed his man, as I well remembered—Jake Osborn, the nigger, who, up to then, had had five wins in succession. "You are Dunn; Augustus

Dunn." I admitted that I was. His next words knocked me all of a heap. "Would you like a match, Mr. Dunn?"

"A match?"

I stared.

"Either now or a little later on?"

"I don't know what you mean."

I did not. I'm no pugilist. Beyond liking to have the gloves on now and then just for the sake of a little exercise, I'm no more of a fighting man than a babe unborn. And as for fighting a match—I should as soon think of jumping off the Monument. And with Tim Basher! The thought of such a thing was like a horrible nightmare. Why, he'd kill me inside ten seconds.

"You see, Mr. Dunn, it's this way. If you didn't care to have a match with us we might like to have one with you. First me; then Jim."

"But, Mr. Basher, I don't understand. I'm not a fighting man."

"No? That's a pity. Because, you see, we are."

"I'm quite aware of that. You have no warmer admirer than I am. Still, I don't see what that has to do with me personally, since I'm not."

"It's this way. Maybe we'll have to pound you. We thought you'd like it better if we let you have some sort of a show."

"You'll have to pound me! Mr. Basher, may I ask why you employ such language to me?"

"We're here to explain. This is a friendly call, Mr. Dunn. If we have to break you into pieces it'll be in a friendly sort of way. But we have our feelings like other men."

"I'm not denying it. Though I'm at a loss to imagine what cause of offence I can have given you."

"We want to know, too. Maybe you'll give us none. Let's be hoping it. It's like this. We've got a cousin—William Flather. You'll have heard of William Flather, Mr. Dunn?" Confound the man—I had. "He's a dead straight man. Right on the level. And we're with him all the time. He's had a little trouble with a bicycle. He's looking to you to get him out of it. That's how it is. See, Mr. Dunn?"

I did. Or, rather, I was beginning to. And the seeing didn't make me any happier. Jim spoke—for the first time.

"There's nothing signed. So there may be no match. But if you're thinking of getting a scoop on Bill, there'll have to be. We thought it only fair to give you notice so that you might have a chance of getting yourself a wee bit fit. If that there jury goes against Bill Flather you'll have the liveliest five minutes along with Tim that ever you did have; and when he's finished I'm going to begin. So get out an Accident Insurance Policy and hire yourself a cot in a Cripples' Home while yet there's time. We're pleased to have had the pleasure of making your acquaintance, Mr. Dunn, and it's wishing you a very good day we are."

Whether those ruffians were or were not amusing themselves at my expense I couldn't say. The question was not a pleasant one to have to settle. The shadowy prospect even of having what they called "a match" with either or both of them was too terrible for contemplation. It would be murder, pure and simple. And that dreadful man's callous allusion to an Accident Insurance Policy and a Cripples' Home. No one ever felt less disposed to go out for tea than I did then.

With the best will in the world, how could I force the other members of the jury to be of my opinion? Especially as the conviction was stealing over me that the landlord of the Plume of Feathers had a bad case, or he would not have thought it necessary to take such unusual measures to win a verdict. If, in open court, he was shown to have behaved in a way to disentitle him to the sympathy of any decent man, with what face should I endeavour to convince the other jurymen that he deserved all that they could give him? What means of persuasion should I use? Should I tell them that if they didn't pronounce against their consciences I should have to fight "a match" with the Basher Brothers? With Lily Cockburn's appealing eyes looking at me all the time! And the almost practical certainty of finding myself the loser of Matilda and her three hundred pounds!

I went to that tea as if I had been going to a funeral. It was with a dreadful feeling that I knocked at Matilda's door. When, opening it, she threw herself into my arms, I thought I should have collapsed. Miss Cockburn was behind her. As, with a little blushing smile, she kissed me too, it was the final straw. If I had not obtained that kiss under false pretences I might have to stare ruin in the face, and take on Jim when Tim had done with me.

It was a merry meal; I pledge my word that I didn't drink out of the cup which cheers! Most of the conversation was about "the case"; or rather, perhaps, I ought to say "the cases." It was taken for granted that the man Flather would lose them both. What would happen to me if he did, I didn't care to think.

"If I knew anyone," declared Matilda, "who had the slightest sympathy with such a creature, I'd never speak to him again."

Of course, I smiled; and expressed my admiration for her sentiments. I had to.

"I've one thing for which to be thankful," murmured Miss Cockburn. "That Mr. Flather isn't going to be hanged. He came within an ace of committing murder. I'm sure at the time I might just as well have been dead."

"Poor Lily!" sighed Matilda. "Poor dear child!"

We all sighed together. Our looks expressed the sympathy we felt. At least, I hope mine did.

It was at this point that the servant girl came in to say that a gentleman wished to see me.

"He says he's a friend of yours, Mr. Dunn, and he's brought you a little present or he wouldn't think of interrupting you."

"Bring him in here," said Matilda's father, who is hospitable to a fault. "You know very well, Augustus, that any friend of yours is always welcome to an extra cup and saucer."

It isn't far from the sitting-room to the hall door. Before I'd had time to collect my thoughts, in came the servant girl with Mr. William Flather. He had a basket in one hand and his hat in the other. He placed the basket on the floor and his hat on top of it.

"My dear Dunn," he began, "this is a pleasure beyond my deserving. I wouldn't be intruding for worlds, only I have a little trifle for you, and since I couldn't find you anywhere I had to find you somewhere, and they told me I might find you here. Will you be introducing me to your friends?"

I introduced him, preserving presence of mind enough not to mention his name.

"Miss Parsons—Miss Parsons' cousin Lily."

I expected to see Miss Cockburn and he fly at each other. But instead of that they regarded each other with what seemed to me to be a distinctly friendly smile. My brain began to whirl. He spoke to me behind his hand.

"And if I might be allowed to ask, which is to be the beautiful Mrs. Dunn?" I explained to him as well as, in the circumstances, I could, that it was my intention to marry Matilda. "It's the fortunate man he is. And happy'll be the street into which such beauty'll bring sunshine." The smooth-tongued scoundrel! Whatever Matilda's strong points are, beauty isn't one of them. "And what'll I be having in my basket but a nosegay of flowers. Mr. Dunn and I are miserable men, being bachelors; what's the use of them to us? But if I might make so bold, Miss Matilda, as to offer a handful of roses to the Queen of them." With that he whipped some flowers out of his basket and handed them to Matilda, who looked as pleased as Punch. "Now, Dunn, my boy, it's something for yourself I've got. And seeing you're a butcher, it seems like bringing coals to Newcastle. But among the good things that come out of Ireland, ham is one. And it's as fine a ham as ever came out of Ireland that I have here."

¶

A DISH was found. The ham produced. A fine one it looked. Mr. Flather sat down by Miss Cockburn.

"If I might make so bold, Miss Lily, as to behave as if I was already one of the saints in Paradise, it's a chair by your side that I'll be taking."

"You haven't told us your friend's name, Augustus," said Matilda.

Then I thought that all was over; and that the compliments, and flowers, and the ham, and "my friend," and I, would be spurned alike. But Mr. Flather came to my help, without realizing my trouble.

"My name is William, Miss Matilda, William. If you'll just call me that it'll be the proudest man I'll be this day. There are those that call me Bill. To hear that name coming from between those lips"—he was looking at Miss Cockburn as he spoke—"I'll have to wait for that until my happiness is altogether beyond anything that I'm deserving."

We tried the ham, which was excellent. Presently Mr. Flather said to Miss Cockburn.

"It's little that you're eating, Miss Lily."

"I've lost my appetite, Mr. ——"

"William," added Mr. Flather.

"Mr. William." She blushed.

"And how came you to suffer so serious a loss?"

"It's because of the trouble I've had."

"Now! Look at that! If I didn't know we were in sympathy! You have had trouble? So have I."

"Mine is with me still."

"Now look at that again! So's mine. It's never left me for a moment, till I came into this room."

I thought it time for me to leave.

"I think, Matilda, if you'll excuse me, I'll be off. I expect Mr.—er—William has something which he wishes to say to me."

Matilda seemed surprised.

"Why, Augustus, whatever are you in such a hurry for?"

"Well, you see, as I say, I expect Mr. Fla—er—William wishes to speak to me in private."

I gave Flather what I meant to be a meaning look, which he seemed very far from understanding.

"I've this to say to you, my dear Dunn, that it's happy I am—never happier. And by your leave I'd like to enjoy a taste of happiness; I would that. Miss Matilda, is it in your way I am?"

"Certainly not. We shall be glad to have you as long as you'll stay. Augustus, sit down. Don't be absurd."

I sat down, hoping for the best.

"Miss Lily, did you ever have a pony that you loved, and did that pony ever take to turning head over heels because of a shock to his nervous system?"

"I never had a pony; but I had something which I loved. But it's gone from me for ever."

"Has it? How comes it to have gone?"

"It was taken from me by"—she sighed—"I'll call him a man."

"Don't call him a man. 'Twould be to flatter him. Who was the scallywag?"

"He was a stranger."

"He'd have to be. Nothing but a stranger would take anything that you loved from you. 'Twould be like robbing the angels of their wings."

"It was like robbing me of mine."

"You're no less an angel because of it, 'tis a sure and a certain thing."

"You say complimentary things," Miss Cockburn murmured.

"There are people to whom you can't pay compliments; they're above and they're beyond. If you've a looking-glass you've had a peep at one of them. What was this murdering thief like to look at? I'll be sworn he had the brand of Cain all over him."

"I never saw him. He came and was gone; it all happened in a flash."

"It was the same with me. Before you could open your mouth the cart was here, and the pony was there, and I was nowhere, and we were all everywhere except where I wanted to be. Do you like ponies, Miss Lily?"

"Dearly. Do you like bicycles?"

"Well; I can't say that I'll be knowing much of them."

I thought of the opinions on the subject which he had expressed to me. Again I rose to go, feeling that it was more than ever time.

"I'm afraid, Matilda, that you really must excuse my running away."

But Flather himself prevented me.

"Now, Dunn, my boy, be easy. We're as snug as we're ever likely to be this side of Paradise. 'Twould be a sin to flee from the company of angels. Might I make so bold, Miss Lily, as to ask what it was you lost that you were fond of?"

"My bicycle."

"Your bicycle! Was that all?"

"All! It meant much to me. We can't all of us afford to have ponies."

"It'll be your own fault, I'm thinking. Hundreds would give all the ponies you'd be wanting for one kind look out of those star-like eyes of yours."

"Now you're laughing at me."

"It's very far I am from doing anything of the kind; I'd never dare. And where was it that you lost your bicycle?"

"It was on the Barnet Road. A horse and cart ran over me. It's a wonder I wasn't killed upon the spot."

"It was on the Barnet Road that a bicycle ran into me, and it's a mercy I'm alive to tell of it. That Barnet Road has seen some wickedness. When did the trouble come to you?" She mentioned the date. "Of all the odd things! Didn't I say from the first that we were in sympathy? It was at the same place, on the same day, that the trouble came to me."

Once more Miss Cockburn sighed.

"If you have suffered what I have suffered, I feel for you. But now I am thankful to think that I am becoming more resigned. I hope I bear no grudge against Mr. Flather."

Flather drew back his chair a little from the table. He looked startled.

"What is it that you're saying?"

"I say I hope that I bear no grudge against Mr. Flather."

A curious change came over Mr. Flather's face as if he was beginning to have some faint understanding of the situation. He began to go red all over. His eyes seemed to increase in size. I watched him with a sort of morbid fascination; expecting every moment that he would turn and rend me. He took out his handkerchief to wipe his forehead.

"Might I just ask you, Miss Lily, to mention what's your surname?"

"Cockburn. I thought you knew."

"It's far enough I was from knowing. It's a miserable being this day I am—I am! Was this altogether friendly of you, Mr. Dunn?"

"I don't see what I've to do with it. I never invited you."

"It's true to you. You never did. I'm a wretched creature just when I thought I was happiest."

"Whatever is the matter with you all at once?"

"Miss Lily, if two bicycles are of any use to you, and a pony and a cart, you've only to say the word and they are yours."

"Mr. William!"

"That's it! I'm Mr. William; and more and less than Mr. William. Sorrow comes to me that I should be ashamed of my own name. It's William Flather it is."

"Not *the* Mr. Flather?"

"Miss Lily, I'm begging you not to look at me as if you thought that I'd be biting. However I come to be the creature that I seem is beyond my telling. But if any number of bicycles and all the ponies and carts you can think of will wash the Ethiopian white, you've only to whisper the word."

Miss Cockburn, who had been glaring at Mr. Flather, now glared at me instead.

"I was not aware, Mr. Dunn, that Mr. Flather was a friend of yours."

Mr. Flather prevented my replying. Which was just as well. For I was looking for words, and doubt if I should have found them.

"He isn't, Miss Lily; he isn't. I'm wanting to be his friend, and Miss Matilda's here; and yours. But I'm like the serpent that crawls, only fit to be trodden under your feet. Yet I'm hoping one day to show to you that I'm a man."

"And it was you who nearly killed me!"

"You see, Miss Lily, it was owing to a concatenation of circumstances. The wind was in the east, and the dust was in my eyes, and one hand was in my pocket, and the other was stiff, and the pony was frisky, and the dust was bothering him, and that afternoon Providence was punishing me for my sins, and that's how it was entirely."

"And you're suing me for damages!"

"Oh, that's altogether a mistake! It's all owing to my scoundrel of a lawyer, and a complication of misunderstandings; I'll pound the life half out of him this very afternoon. As for suing you, if there's anything you'd like by way of compensation you've only to put a name to it and it's yours; even to my house, The Plume of Feathers, and myself, Miss Lily."

I came out of it better than I expected. Matilda never said a word. Though I wondered all the time what she was thinking. And when we parted Miss Cockburn was as kind as she could be.

Mr. Flather put his arm through mine as we were going.

"There's a creature for you! Lovely, tender-hearted, white-souled, worthy to be the mother of men."

"Miss Cockburn is nice," I admitted.

"Nice! Is it only nice you think she is? Dunn, my boy, where's your eyes and your imagination? She's a priceless jewel that any king or emperor might be glad and proud to wear. She's that and more. And to think I nearly chawed her up, and was going to sue her for damages. It's a wonderful world. And you never know your luck."

The "cross actions" were settled out of court. The jury was not required. So I never served. Instead of suing her for damages to his pony's nervous system, Mr. Flather sued Miss Cockburn for heart and hand. And gained the suit. It seemed to me that they were married in less than no time. Matilda's cousin is now mistress of The Plume of Feathers, and her husband's one of my best friends and customers. And whenever the Basher Brothers are in town, and their training arrangements permit, they always dine with Mr. and Mrs. Dunn.

Matilda is Mrs. D. And though I say it perhaps who shouldn't, she can cut a pound of steak with any man. Yes! and trim a loin of mutton.

VIEWPOINTS——

From "The Best People"

By DAVID GRAY AND AVERY HOPWOOD

(As played at the Lyric Theatre, London.)

"I GUESS most people get married because they can't help it."

"A fellow gets linked up with a girl and they look good to each other, and the first thing you know the girl's got him."

"He was so slow that by the time he got us to a party we'd lost our permanent waves."

"I just love capital. It's so soft and restful."

"I'm no prohibitionist, but I can't stand for tryin' to swallow all that's left."

"They're millionaires. That's the only kind of people that can't afford to marry for love."

"You must know that marriage is something more than looking at the moon."

"People get on each other's nerves whether they're rich or poor."

"What's the fun of working if you don't have to?"

"The father or grandfather of half the people you know kept a shop or dug ditches."

"Instead of fitting them for life we've been fitting them for good society."

"This age is pretty much like every other age."

"There's no use getting cross. That's youth."

"Chauffeuring don't satisfy me. There's no future in it. You keep goin' ahead, but you never get anywhere."

"Oh, my goodness! Mother, don't be county with me; I've seen you with your hair down!"

"I know I don't know anything. I've just been well educated."

"A girl shouldn't lose the chance to wear diamonds *and* a wedding ring."

"You don't think I'm boob enough to marry a rich woman? No, sir, she's got to sign a paper tying that money up in the savings bank—well, say for five years. I like money, but when I'm marrying, I want to be the guy that has it."

"Successful marriage, Henry, depends upon community of tastes and interests. That's the reason why the so-called classes marry themselves."

"What have you ever done to make me happy except to give me things?"

"There's lots of nice fellows that have got money, but you just seem to pick out cake-eaters."

"I'm nervous, Henry. You're the first man I ever proposed to."

"It's a womanly opportunity, and if you can help yourself to hundreds of thousands at the same time why not be womanly?"

"No man is a stranger that'll buy me food. They're two nice decent old chaps that want to have supper with a chorus girl so that they can tell their wives about it."

A Long-Ago Affair

Romance—and two idols in the dust

By JOHN GALSWORTHY

MARSLAND, the landscape painter, returning from a day's sketching on the river in the summer of 1921, had occasion to stay the progress of his two-seater about ten miles from London for a minor repair, and while his car was being seen to, strolled away from the garage to have a look at a house where he had spent his holidays as a boy. Walking through a gateway, and passing a large gravel-pit on his left, he was soon opposite the house, which stood back a little in its grounds. Very much changed! More pretentious, not so homely as when his uncle and aunt lived there, and he used to play cricket on the warren opposite. The cricket ground, it seemed, had been turned into a golf course. It was late—the dinner hour—nobody playing; and passing on to the links, he stood taking in the geography. Here must have been where the old pavilion was. And there—still turfed—where he had made that particularly nice stroke to leg, when he went in last and carried his bat for thirteen. Thirty-nine years ago—his sixteenth birthday. How vividly he remembered his new pads! A. P. Lucas had played against them and only made thirty-two. One founded one's style on A. P. Lucas in those days—feet in front of the bat, and pointed a little forward, elegant. You never saw it now. One could sacrifice too much to style! Still, the tendency was all the other way. Style was off—too much off, perhaps!

He stepped back into the sun and sat down on the grass. Peaceful, very still! The haze of the distant downs was visible between his uncle's old house and the next; and there was the clump of elms on the far side behind which the sun would be going down just as it used to then. He pressed the palms of his hands to the turf. A glorious summer, something like that summer of long ago. Was it warmth from the turf or from the past creeping into his heart with a faint aching? Just here he must have sat, after his innings, at her feet peeping out of a flounced dress. Lord! The fools boys were! How headlong and uncalculating their devotions! A softness in voice and eyes, a smile, a touch or two, and they were slaves! Young fools, but good young fools. Mrs. Monteith! And, standing behind her chair—he could see him now—that other idol, Captain MacKay, with his face of browned ivory, just the colour of that elephant's tusk his uncle had, which had gone so yellow, and his perfect black moustache, white tie, check suit, carnation, spats, Malacca cane—fascinating! Mrs. Monteith, "the grass widow," they had called her! He remembered the look in people's eyes, the tone in their voices, when they talked of her. But what a pretty woman! He had "fallen for her" at first sight, as the Yankees put it—her special scent, her daintiness, her voice—that day on the river, when she made much of him, and Captain MacKay attended Evelyn Curtiss so assiduously that he was expected to propose. Quaint period! They used the word courting then, wore full skirts, high stays; and himself a blue elastic belt round his white-flannelled waist. And in the evening, afterwards, his aunt had said, with an arch smile: "Good night, *silly* boy!" Silly boy indeed, with a flower the grass widow had dropped pressed by his cheek into his pillow! What folly! And that next Sunday, looking forward to church, passionately brushing his top hat; all through the service spying at her creamy profile, two pews in front on the left, between goat-bearded old Hallgrave, her uncle, and her pink, broad, white-haired aunt; scheming to get near her when she came out, lingering, lurking, getting just a smile and the rustle of her flounces. Ah, ha! A little went a long way then! And the last day of his holidays and its night with the first introduction to reality. Who said the Victorian age was innocent?

Marsland put his palm up to his cheek. No, the dew was not yet falling. And his mind lightly turned and tossed his memories of women, as a man turns and tosses hay to air it; but nothing remembered gave him quite that first adventure's feeling.

His aunt's dance! His first white waistcoat, bought *ad hoc* from the local tailor, his tie laboriously imitating the hero—Captain MacKay's. All came back with such freshness in the quiet of the warren—expectancy, humbled, shy excitement, the breathless asking for a dance, the writing "Mrs. Monteith" twice on his little gilt-edged programme with its tiny tasselled white pencil; her slow-moving fan, her smile. And the first dance, when it came! What infinite care not to tread on her white satin toes; what a thrill when her arm pressed his in the crush—a holiness about all the first part of that evening, with yet another dance to come! If only he could have twirled her and "reversed" like his pattern, Captain MacKay! The growing delirium as the second dance came near, making him cut his partner. The cool, grass-scented air out on the dark terrace, with the chafers booming by, and in the starshine the poplars wondrously tall; the careful adjustment of his tie and waistcoat, the careful polishing of his hot face! A long breath then, and into the house to find her! Ballroom, supper-room, stairs, library, billiard-room, all drawn blank. "Estudiantina" going on and on, and he a wandering, white-waistcoated young ghost. Ah! The conservatory—and the hurrying there! And then the moment which had always been, was even now, such a blurred, confused impression. Smothered voices from between a clump of flowers: "I saw her." "Who was the man?" A glimpse, gone past in a flash, of an ivory face, a black moustache. And then her voice, more smothered still: "Hubert!" And there was her hot hand clasping his, drawing him to her; her scent, her face smiling, very set! A rustling behind the flowers—those people spying; and suddenly her lips were on his cheek, the kiss sounding in his ears, her voice saying, very softly: "Hubert, dear boy!" The rustle receded, ceased. What a long, silent minute, then, among the ferns and blossoms in the dusk, with her face close to his, pale, perturbed—before she led him out into the light—slowly realizing that she had made use of him to shelter her. A boy—not old enough to be her lover, but old enough to save her name and that of Captain MacKay! Her kiss—the last of many—but not upon *his* lips, *his* cheeks! Ah! hard work realizing that! A boy of no account; a boy, who in a day would be at school again, kissed that *he* and *she* might renew their intrigue unsuspected!

And how had he behaved the rest of that evening of romance bedrabbled? Sure, he did not know. Betrayed with a kiss. Two idols in the dust. And did they care what he was feeling? No! All they cared for was to cover up their tracks with him! But somehow—somehow—he had not shown her that he knew. Only, when their dance was over, and someone came and took her for the next, he had escaped up to his little room, torn off his gloves, his waistcoat, lain on his bed, thought bitter thoughts. A boy—just used! A boy! There he had stayed, with the thrum of the music in his ears, till at last it died away and the carriages were gone and the night was quiet.

Squatting on the warren grass, still warm and dewless, Marsland rubbed his knees. Nothing like boys for generosity! And, with a little smile, he thought of his aunt next morning, half arch and half concerned: "It isn't nice, dear, to sit out in dark corners, and—well, perhaps it wasn't your fault; but still, it isn't nice—not—quite——" And of how suddenly she had stopped, looking in his face, where his lips were curling in his first ironic laugh. She had never forgiven him that laugh—thinking him a cynical young Lothario. And Marsland thought: "Live and learn! Wonder what became of those two? Victorian age! Hatches battened down in those days! But, innocent—my hat!"

Ah! The sun was off, dew falling. He got up, rubbing his knees to take the stiffness out of them. Pigeons in the wood beyond were calling. A window in his uncle's old home blazed like a jewel in the last sun's rays between the poplar trees. Heh, dear! A little long-ago affair!

The Going of the White Swan

They knew him well in Heaven—through his wife

By SIR GILBERT PARKER

"WHY don't she come back, father?" The man shook his head, his hand fumbled with the wolf-skin robe covering the child, and he made no reply.

"She'd come if she knew I was hurted, wouldn't she?"

The father nodded, and then turned restlessly toward the door, as though expecting someone. The look was troubled, and the pipe he held was not alight, though he made a pretence of smoking.

"Suppose the wild cat had got me, she'd be sorry when she comes, wouldn't she?"

There was no reply yet, save by gesture, the language of primitive man; but the big body shivered a little, and the uncouth hand felt for a place in the bed where the lad's knee made a lump under the robe. He felt the little heap tenderly, but the child winced.

"S-sh, but that hurts! This wolf-skin's 'most too much on me, isn't it, father?"

The man softly—yet awkwardly too—lifted the robe, folded it back, and slowly uncovered the knee. The leg was worn away almost to skin and bone, but the knee itself was swollen with inflammation. He bathed it with some water, mixed with vinegar and herbs, then drew down the deer-skin shirt at the child's shoulder, and did the same with it. Both shoulder and knee bore the marks of teeth—where a huge wild cat had made havoc—and the body had long red scratches.

Presently the man shook his head sorrowfully, and covered up the small disfigured frame again, but this time with a tanned skin of the caribou. The flames of the huge wood fire dashed the walls and floor with a velvety red and black, and the large iron kettle, bought of the Company at Fort Sacrament, puffed out geysers of steam.

The place was a low hut with parchment windows and rough mud-mortar lumped between the logs. Skins hung along two sides, with bullet-holes and knife-holes showing: of the great grey wolf, the red puma, the bronze hill-lion, the beaver, the bear, and the sable; and in one corner was a huge pile of them. Bare of the usual comforts as the room was, it had a sort of refinement also, joined to an inexpressible loneliness; you could scarce have told how or why.

"Father," said the boy, his face pinched with pain for a moment, "it hurts so all over, every once in a while."

His fingers caressed the leg just below the knee.

"Father," he suddenly added, "what does it mean when you hear a bird sing in the middle of the night?"

The woodsman looked down anxiously into the boy's face. "It hasn't no meaning, Dominique. There ain't such a thing on the Labrador Heights as a bird singin' in the night. That's only in warm countries where there's nightingales. So—*bien sûr!*"

The boy had a wise, dreamy, speculative look. "Well, I guess it was a nightingale—it didn't sing like any I ever heard."

The look of nervousness deepened in the woodsman's face. "What did it sing like, Dominique?"

"So it made you shiver. You wanted it to go on, and yet you didn't want it. It was pretty, but you felt as if something was going to snap inside of you."

"When did you hear it, my son?"

"Twice last night—and—and I guess it was Sunday the other time. I don't know, for there hasn't been no Sunday up here since mother went away—has there?"

"Mebbe not."

The veins were beating like live cords in the man's throat and at his temples.

"'Twas just the same as Father Corraine bein' here, when mother had Sunday, wasn't it?"

The man made no reply, but a gloom drew down his forehead, and his lips doubled in as if he endured physical pain. He got to his feet and paced the floor. For weeks he had listened to the same kind of talk from this wounded and, as he thought, dying son,

and he was getting less and less able to bear it. The boy at nine years of age was, in manner of speech, the merest child, but his thoughts were sometimes large and wise. The only white child within a compass of a thousand miles or so; the lonely life of the hills and plains, so austere in winter, so melted to a sober joy in summer; listening to the talk of his elders at camp-fires and on the hunting-trail, when, even as an infant almost, he was swung in a blanket from a tree or was packed in the torch-crane of a canoe; and, more than all, the care of a good, loving—if passionate—little mother: all these had made him far wiser than his years. He had been hours upon hours each day alone with the birds, and squirrels, and wild animals, and something of the keen scent and instinct of the animal world had entered into his body and brain, so that he felt what he could not understand.

He saw that he had worried his father, and it troubled him. He thought of something.

"Daddy," he said, "let me have it."

A smile struggled for life in the hunter's face, as he turned to the wall and took down the skin of a silver fox. He held it on his palm for a moment, looking at it in an interested, satisfied way, then he brought it over and put it into the child's hands; and the smile now shaped itself, as he saw an eager pale face buried in the soft fur.

"Good! good!" he said involuntarily.

"*Bon! bon!*" said the boy's voice from the fur, in the language of his mother, who added a strain of Indian blood to her French ancestry.

The two sat there, the man half-kneeling on the low bed, and stroking the fur very gently. It could scarcely be thought that such pride should be spent on a little pelt, by a mere backwoodsman and his nine-year-old son. One has seen a woman fingering a splendid necklace, her eyes fascinated by the bunch of warm, deep jewels—a light not of mere vanity, or hunger, or avarice in her face—only the love of the beautiful thing. But this was an animal's skin. Did they feel the animal underneath it yet, giving it beauty, life, glory?

The silver-fox skin is the prize of the north, and this one was of the boy's own harvesting. While his father was away he saw the fox creeping by the hut. The joy of the hunter seized him, and guided his eye over the "sights" of his father's rifle, as he rested the barrel on the window-sill, and the maltan was his! Now his finger ran into the hole made by the bullet, and he gave a little laugh of modest triumph. Minutes passed as they studied, felt, and admired the skin, the hunter proud of his son, the son alive with a primitive passion, which inflicts suffering to get the beautiful thing. Perhaps the tenderness as well as the wild passion of the animal gets into the hunter's blood, and tips his fingers at times with an exquisite kindness—as one has noted in a lion fondling her young, or in tigers as they sport upon the sands of the desert. This boy had seen his father shoot a splendid moose, and as it lay dying, drop down and kiss it in the neck for sheer love of its handsomeness. Death is no insult. It is the law of the primitive world—war, and love in war.

They sat there for a long time, not speaking, each busy in his own way: the boy full of imaginings, strange, half-heathen, half-angelic feelings; the man roaming in that savage, romantic, superstitious atmosphere which belongs to the north, and to the north alone. At last the boy lay back on the pillow, his finger still in the bullet-hole of the pelt. His eyes closed, and he seemed about to fall asleep, but presently he looked up and whispered: "I haven't said my prayers, have I?"

The father shook his head in a sort of rude confusion.

"I can pray out loud if I want to, can't I?"

"Of course, Dominique." The man shrank a little.

"I forget a good many times, but I know one all right, for I said it when the bird was singing. It isn't one out of the book Father Corraine sent mother by Pretty Pierre; it's one she taught me out of her own head. P'r'aps I'd better say it."

"P'r'aps, if you want to." The voice was husky.

The boy began:

"O bon Jésu, who died to save us from our sins, and to lead us to Thy country, where there is no cold, nor hunger, nor thirst, and where no one is afraid, listen to Thy child. . . . When the great winds and rains come down from the hills, do not let the floods drown us, nor the woods cover us, nor the snow-slide bury us; and do not let the prairie-fires burn us. Keep wild beasts from killing us in our sleep, and give us good hearts that we may not kill them in anger."

His finger twisted involuntarily into the

bullet-hole in the pelt, and he paused a moment.

"Keep us from getting lost, O gracious Saviour."

Again there was a pause, his eyes opened wide, and he said:

"Do you think mother's lost, father?"

A heavy broken breath came from the father, and he replied haltingly: "Mebbe, mebbe so."

Dominique's eyes closed again. "I'll make up some," he said slowly.—"And if mother's lost, bring her back again to us, for everything's going wrong."

Again he paused, then went on with the prayer as it had been taught him.

"Teach us to hear Thee whenever Thou callest, and to see Thee when Thou visitest us, and let the blessed Mary and all the saints speak often to Thee for us. O Christ, hear us. Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us. Amen."

Making the sign of the cross, he lay back, and said: "I'll go to sleep now, I guess."

The man sat for a long time looking at the pale, shining face, at the blue veins showing painfully dark on the temples and forehead, at the firm little white hand, which was as brown as a butternut a few weeks before. The longer he sat, the deeper did his misery sink into his soul. His wife had gone, he knew not where, his child was wasting to death, and he had for his sorrows no inner consolation. He had ever had that touch of mystical imagination inseparable from the far north, yet he had none of that religious belief which swallowed up natural awe and turned it to the refining of life, and to the advantage of a man's soul. Now it was forced in upon him that his child was wiser than himself, wiser and safer. His life had been spent in the wastes, with rough deeds and rugged habits, and a youth of hardship, danger, and almost savage endurance, had given him a half-barbarian temperament, which could strike an angry blow at one moment and fondle to death at the next.

When he married sweet Lucette Barbond his religion reached little farther than a belief in the Scarlet Hunter of the Kimash Hills and those voices that could be heard calling in the night, till their time of sleep be past, and they should rise and reconquer the north.

Not even Father Corraine, whose ways were like those of his Master, could ever bring him to a more definite faith. His wife had at first striven with him, mourning yet loving. Sometimes the savage in him had broken out over the little creature, merely because barbaric tyranny was in him—torture followed by the passionate kiss. But how was she philosopher enough to understand the cause?

When she fled from their hut one bitter day, as he roared some wild words at her, it was because her nerves had all been shaken from threatened death by wild beasts (of which he did not know), and his violence drove her mad. She had run out of the house, and on, and on, and on—and she had never come back. That was weeks ago, and there had been no word nor sign of her since. The man was now busy with it all, in a slow, cumbrous way. A nature more to be touched by things seen than by things told, his mind was being awakened in a massive kind of fashion. He was viewing this crisis of his life as one sees a human face in the wide searching light of a great fire. He was restless, but he held himself still by a strong effort, not wishing to disturb the sleeper. His eyes seemed to retreat farther and farther back under his shaggy brows.

The great logs in the chimney burned brilliantly, and a brass crucifix over the child's head now and again reflected soft little flashes of light. This caught the hunter's eye. Presently there grew up in him a vague kind of hope that, somehow, this symbol would bring him luck—that was the way he put it to himself. He had felt this—and something more—when Dominique prayed. Somehow, Dominique's prayer was the only one he had ever heard that had gone home to him, had opened up the big sluices of his nature, and let the light of God flood in. No, there was another: the one Lucette made on the day that they were married, when a wonderful timid reverence played through his hungry love for her.

¶

HOURS passed. All at once, without any other motion or gesture, the boy's eyes opened wide with a strange intense look.

"Father," he said slowly, and in a kind of dream, "when you hear a sweet horn blow at night, is it the Scarlet Hunter calling?"

"P'r'aps. Why, Dominique?" He made up his mind to humour the boy, though it gave him strange aching forebodings. He had seen grown men and

women with these fancies—and they had died.

"I heard one blowing just now, and the sounds seemed to wave over my head. Perhaps he's calling for someone that's lost."

"Mebbe."

"And I heard a voice singing—it wasn't a bird to-night."

"There was no voice, Dominique."

"Yes, yes." There was something fine in the grave, courteous certainty of the lad. "I waked, and you were sitting there thinking, and I shut my eyes again, and I heard the voice. I remember the tune and the words."

"What were the words?" In spite of himself the hunter felt awed.

"I've heard mother sing them, or something most like them:

"Why does the fire no longer burn?
(I am so lonely.)
Why does the tent-door swing outward?
(I have no home.)
Oh, let me breathe hard in your face!
(I am so lonely.)
Oh, why do you shut your eyes to me?
(I have no home.)"

The boy paused.

"Was that all, Dominique?"

"No, not all."

"Let us make friends with the stars;
(I am so lonely.)
Give me your hand, I will hold it.
(I have no home.)
Let us go hunting together.
(I am so lonely.)
We will sleep at God's camp to-night.
(I have no home.)"

Dominique did not sing, but recited the words with a sort of chanting inflection.

"What does it mean when you hear a voice like that, father?"

"I don't know. Who told—your mother—the song?"

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose she just made them up—she and God. . . . There! There it is again? Don't you hear it—don't you hear it, daddy?"

"No, Dominique, it's only the kettle singing."

"A kettle isn't a voice. Daddy—" He paused a little, then went on, hesitatingly—"I saw a white swan fly through the door over your shoulder, when you came in to-night."

"No, no, Dominique; it was a flurry of snow blowing over my shoulder."

"But it looked at me with two shining eyes."

"That was two stars shining through the door, my son."

"How could there be snow flying and stars shining too, father?"

"It was just drift-snow on a light wind, but the stars were shining above, Dominique."

The man's voice was anxious and unconvincing, his eyes had a hungry, hunted look. The legend of the White Swan had to do with the passing of a human soul. The swan had come in—would it go out alone? He touched the boy's hand—it was hot with fever; he felt the pulse—it ran high; he watched the face—it had a glowing light. Something stirred within him, and passed like a wave to the farthest courses of his being. Through his misery he had touched the garment of the Master of Souls. As though a voice said to him there, "Someone hath touched me," he got to his feet, and, with a sudden blind humility, lit two candles, placed them on a shelf in a corner before a porcelain figure of the Virgin, as he had seen his wife do. Then he picked a small handful of fresh spruce twigs from a branch over the chimney, and laid them beside the candles. After a short pause he came slowly to the head of the boy's bed. Very solemnly he touched the foot of the Christ on the cross with the tips of his fingers, and brought them to his lips with an indescribable reverence. After a moment, standing with eyes fixed on the face of the crucified figure, he said, in a shaking voice:

"*Pardon, bon Jésu! Sauvez mon enfant! Ne me laissez pas seul!*"

The boy looked up with eyes again grown unnaturally heavy, and said:

"Amen! . . . *Bon Jésu!* . . . *Encore! Encore, mon père!*"

The boy slept. The father stood still by the bed for a time, but at last slowly turned and went towards the fire.

Outside, two figures were approaching the hut—a man and a woman; yet at first glance the man might easily have been taken for a woman, because of the long black robe which he wore, and because his hair fell loose on his shoulders and his face was clean-shaven.

"Have patience, my daughter," said the man. "Do not enter till I call you. But

stand close to the door, if you will, and hear all."

So saying, he raised his hand as in a kind of benediction, passed to the door and, after tapping very softly, opened it, entered, and closed it behind him—not so quickly, however, but that the woman caught a glimpse of the father and the boy. In her eyes there was the divine look of motherhood.

"Peace be to this house!" said the man gently as he stepped forward from the door.

The father, startled, turned shrinkingly on him, as if he had seen a spirit.

"M'sieu' le curé!" he said in French, with an accent much poorer than that of the priest, or even of his own son. He had learned French from his wife; he himself was English.

The priest's quick eye had taken in the lighted candles at the little shrine, even as he saw the painfully changed aspect of the man.

"The wife and child, Bagot?" he asked, looking round. "Ah, the boy!" he added, and going toward the bed, continued, presently, in a low voice: "Dominique is ill?"

Bagot nodded, and then answered: "A wild-cat and then fever, Father Corraine."

The priest felt the boy's pulse softly, then with a close personal look he spoke hardly above his breath, yet distinctly too:

"Your wife, Bagot?"

"She is not here, m'sieu'." The voice was low and gloomy.

"Where is she, Bagot?"

"I do not know, m'sieu'."

"When did you see her last?"

"Four weeks ago, m'sieu'."

"That was September, this is October—winter. On the ranches they let their cattle loose upon the plains in winter, knowing not where they go, yet looking for them to return in the spring. But a woman—a woman and a wife—is different. . . . Bagot, you have been a rough, hard man, and you have been a stranger to your God, but I thought you loved your wife and child!"

The hunter's hands clenched, and a wicked light flashed up into his eyes; but the calm, benignant gaze of the other cooled the tempest in his veins. The priest sat down on the couch where the child lay, and took the fevered hand in his very softly.

"Stay where you are, Bagot," he said; "just there where you are, and tell me what your trouble is, and why your wife is not here. . . . . Say all honestly—by the name of the Christ!" he added, lifting up a large iron crucifix that hung on his breast.

Bagot sat down on a bench near the fireplace, the light playing on his bronzed, powerful face, his eyes shining like two coals. After a moment he began:

"I don't know how it started. I'd lost a lot of pelts—stolen they were, down on the Child o' Sin river. Well, she was hasty and nervous, like as not—she always was brisker and more sudden than I am. I—I laid my powder-horn and whisky-flask—up there!"

He pointed to the little shrine of the Virgin, where now his candles were burning. The priest's grave eyes did not change expression at all, but looked out wisely, as though he understood everything.

¶

BAGOT continued: "I didn't notice it, but she had put some flowers there. She said something with an edge, her face all snapping angry, threw the things down, and called me a heathen and a wicked heretic—and I don't say now but she'd a right to do it. But I let out then, for them stolen pelts were rasping me on the raw. I said something pretty rough, and made as if I was goin' to break her in two—just fetched up my hands, and went like this!——" With a singular simplicity he made a wild gesture with his hands, and an animal-like snarl came from his throat. Then he looked at the priest with the honest intensity of a boy.

"Yes, that is what you *did*—what was it you *said* which was 'pretty rough'?"

There was a slight hesitation, then came the reply:

"I said there was enough powder spilt on the floor to kill all the priests in heaven."

A fire suddenly shot up into Father Corraine's face, and his lips tightened for an instant, but presently he was as before, and he said:

"How that will face you one day, Bagot! Go on. What else?"

Sweat began to break out on Bagot's face, and he spoke as though he were carrying a heavy weight on his shoulders, low and brokenly.

"Then I said, 'And if virgins has it so fine, why didn't you stay one?'"

"Blasphemer!" said the priest in a stern, reproachful voice, his face turning a little pale, and he brought the crucifix to his lips. "To the mother of your child—shame! What more?"

"She threw up her hands to her ears with

a wild cry, ran out of the house, down the hills, and away. I went to the door and watched her as long as I could see her, and waited for her to come back—but she never did. I've hunted and hunted, but I can't find her." Then, with a sudden thought, "Do you know anything of her, m'sieu'?"

The priest appeared not to hear the question. Turning for a moment toward the boy who now was in a deep sleep, he looked at him intently. Presently he spoke:

"Ever since I married you and Lucette Barbond, you have stood in the way of her duty, Bagot. How well I remember that first day when you knelt before me! Was ever so sweet and good a girl—with her golden eyes and the look of summer in her face, and her heart all pure? Nothing had spoiled her—you cannot spoil such women—God is in their hearts. But you, what have you cared? One day you would fondle her—and the next you were a savage—and she, so gentle, so gentle all the time! Then, for her religion and the faith of her child—she has fought for it, prayed for it, suffered for it. You thought you had no need, for you had so much happiness, which you did not deserve—that was it. But she: with all a woman suffers, how can she bear life—and man—without God? No, it is not possible. And you thought you and your few superstitions were enough for her. —Ah, poor fool! She should worship you! So selfish, so small, for a man who knows in his heart how great God is.—You did not love her."

"By the Heaven above, yes!" said Bagot, half starting to his feet.

"Ah, 'by the Heaven above,' no! nor the child. For true love is unselfish and patient, and where it is the stronger, it cares for the weaker; but it was your wife who was unselfish, patient, and cared for you. Every time she said an *ave* she thought of you, and her every thanks to the good God had you therein. They know you well in heaven, Bagot—through your wife. Did you ever pray—ever since I married you to her?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"An hour or so ago."

Once again the priest's eyes glanced towards the lighted candles.

Presently he said: "You asked me if I had heard anything of your wife. Listen, and be patient while you listen. . . . Three weeks ago I was camping on the Sundust plains, over against the Young Sky river. In the morning, as I was lighting a fire outside my tent, my young Cree Indian with me, I saw coming over the crest of a landwave, from the very lips of the sunrise, as it were, a band of Indians. I could not quite make them out. I hoisted my little flag on the tent, and they hurried on to me. I did not know the tribe—they had come from near Hudson Bay. They spoke Chinook, and I could understand them. Well, as they came near, I saw that they had a white woman with them."

Bagot leaned forward, his body strained, every muscle tense. "A woman!" he said, as if breathing gave him sorrow—"my wife?"

"Your wife."

"Quick! Quick! Go on—oh, go on, m'sieu'—good father."

"She fell at my feet, begging me to save her. . . . I waved her off."

The sweat dropped from Bagot's forehead, a low growl broke from him, and he made such a motion as a lion might make at its prey.

"You wouldn't—wouldn't save her—you coward!" He ground the words out.

The priest raised his palm against the other's violence. "Hush! . . . She drew away, saying that God and man had deserted her. . . . We had breakfast, the chief and I. Afterwards, when the chief had eaten much and was in good humour, I asked him where he had got the woman. He said that he had found her on the plains—she had lost her way. I told him then that I wanted to buy her. He said to me, 'What does a priest want of a woman?' I said that I wished to give her back to her husband. He said that he had found her, and she was his, and that he would marry her when they reached the great camp of the tribe. I was patient. It would not do to make him angry. I wrote down on a piece of bark the things that I would give him for her: an order on the Company at Fort o' Sin for shot, blankets, and beads. He said no."

The priest paused. Bagot's face was all swimming with sweat, his body was rigid, but the veins of his neck knotted and twisted.

"For the love of God, go on!" he said hoarsely.

"Yes, 'for the love of God.' I have no money, I am poor, but the Company will always honour my orders, for I pay sometimes, by the help of Christ. *Bien*, I added some things to the list: a saddle, a rifle, and

some flannel. But no, he would not. Once more I put many things down. It was a big bill—it would keep me poor for five years.—To save your wife, John Bagot, you who drove her from your roof, blaspheming, and railing at such as I . . . . I offered the things, and told him that was all that I could give. After a little he shook his head, and said that he must have the woman for his wife. I did not know what to add. I said—'She is white, and the white people will never rest till they have killed you all, if you do this thing. The Company will track you down.' Then he said, 'The whites must catch me and fight me before they kill me.' . . . What was there to do?"

Bagot came near to the priest, bending over him savagely:

"You let her stay with them—you, with hands like a man!"

"Hush!" was the calm, reproving answer. "I was one man, they were twenty."

"Where was your God to help you, then?"

"Her God and mine was with me."

Bagot's eyes blazed. "Why didn't you offer rum—rum? They'd have done it for that—one—five—ten kegs of rum!"

He swayed to and fro in his excitement, yet their voices hardly rose above a hoarse whisper all the time.

"You forget," answered the priest, "that it is against the law, and that as a priest of my order I am vowed to give no rum to an Indian."

"A vow? A vow? Son of God! what is a vow beside a woman—my wife?"

His misery and his rage were pitiful to see.

"Perjure my soul? Offer rum? Break my vow in the face of the enemies of God's Church? What have you done for me that I should do this for you, John Bagot?"

"Coward!" was the man's despairing cry, with a sudden threatening movement. "Christ Himself would have broke a vow to save her."

The grave, kind eyes of the priest met the other's fierce gaze, and quieted the wild storm that was about to break.

"Who am I that I should teach my Master?" he said solemnly. "What would you give Christ, Bagot, if He *had* saved her to you?"

The man shook with grief, and tears rushed from his eyes, so suddenly and fully had a new emotion passed through him.

"Give—give?" he cried; "I would give twenty years of my life!"

The figure of the priest stretched up with a gentle grandeur. Holding out the iron crucifix, he said: "On your knees and swear it, John Bagot."

There was something inspiring, commanding, in the voice and manner, and Bagot, with a new hope rushing through his veins, knelt and repeated his words.

The priest turned to the door and called, "Madame Lucette!"

The boy, hearing, waked, and sat up in bed suddenly.

"Mother! mother!" he cried, as the door flew open.

The mother came to her husband's arms, laughing and weeping, and an instant afterwards was pouring out her love and anxiety over her child.

Father Corraine now faced the man, and with a soft exaltation of voice and manner, said:

"John Bagot, in the name of Christ, I demand twenty years of your life—of love and obedience to God. I broke my vow, I perjured my soul, I bought your wife with ten kegs of rum!"

The tall hunter dropped again to his knees, and caught the priest's hand to kiss it.

"No, no—this!" the priest said, and laid his iron crucifix against the other's lips.

Dominique's voice came clearly through the room:

"Mother, I saw the white swan fly away through the door when you came in."

"My dear, my dear," she said, "there was no white swan." But she clasped the boy to her breast protectingly, and whispered an *ave*.

"Peace be to this house," said the voice of the priest.

And there was peace: for the child lived, and the man has loved, and has kept his vow, even unto this day.

For the visions of the boy, who can know the divers ways in which God speaks to the children of men?

Charles

Greater love hath no man——

By CAPT. FRANK H. SHAW

OFFICIALLY, as entered in the ship's articles—in a sprawling hand that would have been sneered at by a modern second-standard urchin—he was "Charles James Syzer." To Captain Cleresyte he was "Charles," but to the rest of the ship's company he was "the skipper's boy." His rating in the log was captain's steward, but long custom, which makes the law of the sea, ordained that he should be the captain's "boy" when he was twenty-five, and as such he remained, though the clear skin of his youth was now drawn and wrinkled, crow's feet seared the corners of his slightly protruding eyes, the thick thatch of hair, that had always been a convenient handle for an irate second steward, had thinned and whitened, and the slim, erect figure, briskness personified, was now bent and lacking somewhat in vigour. But he was still the captain's "boy," and it seemed likely he would remain so until the end of time, for not a soul aboard the *Lohengrin* save the captain himself remembered his advent; he was a fixture in the liner, as integral a part of her as the funnels or the big standard compass on the flying bridge. So, too, was Captain Cleresyte; the travellers of two continents knew the old commodore and fought for berths in his ship, for that spelled safety and comfort.

The huge vessel was booming drearily at her moorings, the first bell had warned all who were not passengers to leave the decks, the steerage and second-cabin gangways had been withdrawn ashore, and the pilot was standing near the compass, talking with the fourth officer. Charles took down the heavy uniform overcoat from its accustomed peg, and brushed the collar with loving hands. Then he breathed lightly on the gold-laced shoulder-straps, polished them with a handkerchief until they glowed radiantly, and was just finished in time to assist the captain into the comfortable garment as the old sea-dog returned to his room from a conversation with the marine surveyor on the promenade deck.

"Back again, Charles? Everything in order?"

"Yes, sir; back again, and everything's in order. Your glasses, sir." He handed the Treiders in their case, brought forward a muffler and fur-lined gloves, saw to their donning and said: "Your tea as usual, sir, when we're past the Rock Light?"

"Yes, Charles; as usual. You don't seem to forget anything. I wonder what I should do without you; you've become very necessary to me. But we're growing old, Charles, both of us. Well, well, everything comes to an end some time or other, I suppose. And this is to be our last voyage—my last voyage, that is. We'll make it a good one." Shaking his hoary head Captain Cleresyte stalked up to the flying bridge, returned the salutes of officers and pilots courteously, and looked over the side. It was exactly half-past four; the large bags of mails were being rushed aboard; the shore-staff stood by the gangway. The ship's bell rang, a cheer resounded along the Mersey shores, the ship's band struck up "Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye," and the voyage had begun.

There was a raw nip in the air; Charles, who had snugged himself up under the lee of the wheelhouse, was chilled to the marrow. But for thirty years and more he had always occupied that same post, ready to fly down at a word to the captain's room beneath the bridge for anything forgotten—to bring a handkerchief, a cup of coffee, anything and everything, often forestalling his master's wish before it was uttered, until he had come to think for Cleresyte, to be his second brain, as regarded the trivial matters of everyday comfort. As Captain Cleresyte attended to the safety of the ship he commanded, so did Charles attend to the well-being of the man in charge.

A drizzle of rain set in. It soaked the steward through; he shivered a little, but

stuck doggedly to his post. There was something of a crush in the river; Captain Cleresyte forgot all things save his ship's safety. So that when the blinking eye of the Rock Light shot abeam, the cup of tea Charles carried to starboard clattered on the saucer, and Cleresyte realized the cause.

"Go below to my room, and sit on the steam-heater," he said, sternly. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Charles. I'm surprised at you. You'll be ill next thing you know, and what shall I do then?"

Charles went below, and obeyed instructions implicitly. But before he was fairly warm he noticed a parcel of papers on the table, and orderly instincts worked within him. He put the papers carefully away in their appointed cupboard, went to the purser's office for the late letters, arranged them on the green board above the captain's table, and then polished up the old sextant with fingers that touched the glittering metal reverently. He was still busy when Captain Cleresyte descended.

"The dinner menu, sir," said Charles confidentially, thrusting the printed card under Cleresyte's eyes. "I suppose you'll have the usual sailing night dinner, sir—a little clear soup, some fish and——"

"Yes; but time enough to think about dinner. It's the last sailing night—outward, at least—for me, Charles. We've gone through a good deal in the past thirty-five years. It is thirty-five years, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir, thirty-five years to the day, since first you were good enough to put in a word for me, and have me promoted when you went up."

"Ah! thirty-five years. And it's coming to an end, Charles. Well, well, I was never one to repine. We've earned our pay, Charles, and a little over, perhaps; we've run clear of accidents—real accidents, that is—and we've kept the flag flying. And now it's coming to an end. Ay, ay."

Charles stood, respectfully silent, waiting his master's next words. But Captain Cleresyte had sunk into a reverie; no man can take a palpitating complexity of steel and iron across the worst three thousand miles of sea in the world close on eight hundred times without laying up a store of reminiscences. Charles was thinking too, not of seafaring triumphs or of glad encounters with almost overwhelming forces, but of a certain day nearer forty years ago than thirty, when Captain Cleresyte, then a youngster of twenty-five and newly appointed fourth officer, had found him, Charles, lying shamefully intoxicated beneath the settee in the mess-room, drunk on stolen spirit. The chief steward had looked in just at that moment, and had spoken his mind on Charles's condition in no uncertain voice.

"I'll fire him out, sir, and send you another steward in his place," said Mr. Smiles. "Here, you get your traps packed and clear out of this."

"Give him another chance," said Mr. Cleresyte, fourth officer of the *Parsifal*; and when the chief steward snorted, stooped and dragged the delinquent forth, it was Cleresyte who laid a restraining hand on his arm, and begged him to be lenient. Charles did not remember this, but he remembered the after-time, when his saviour, as he persisted in calling him, accompanied the broken, repentant man to the steward's room, and there, in full view of laughing, deriding witnesses, caused him to sign the pledge, which pledge had never been broken again.

"It won't last, sir," said the chief steward. "He's a bad lot from the beginning. It would be better to fire him out at once." But Mr. Cleresyte had insisted, had spoken darkly of secrets in the chief steward's past, and had prevailed after a stormy discussion.

"I can't tell what you did it for, sir," had been Charles's only acknowledgment of the service done.

"Can't you? Didn't I see you with your wife aboard the other day—that young woman with the baby? Well, what would have become of you if you'd been fired out? Would any other company have taken you on after being discharged from the Legend Line for drunkenness? I don't think so. And then what would have become of your wife and that child, eh? Don't be a fool again, that's all. Keep teetotal since you can't keep temperate, and I'll see you don't get into trouble again."

That was the beginning of Charles's dog-like allegiance.

When Mr. Cleresyte became Captain Cleresyte, Charles left the mess-room and entered the captain's cabin as recognized body servant, and had changed with him from the *Parsifal* to the *Tannhäuser*, from the *Tannhäuser* to the *Wagner*, and from the *Wagner* to the present ship, the *Lohengrin*. And now—the last voyage had commenced; after the lapse of a month or so the long, faithful service would be over and done

with, Captain Cleresyte would become a landsman, the victim of slatternly domestics, the prey of a designing landlady. Charles felt very bitter against that supposititious landlady as the thought crossed his mind. How would she know just how he liked his steak broiled? How would she know how to brush his clothes every morning, and fold them every night? Captain Cleresyte had never married; he owned no regular home. When the long connexion was over he would become a victim to shore harpies, who would prey upon him like leeches.

But there was a way out of the dilemma. Faltering somewhat, he voiced his brilliant inspiration.

"I suppose, sir, it won't mean us two parting, like. You'll never manage to get on without me, sir. You'll need someone to look after you; why, bless you, sir, you'd be lost without old Charles. We'll just be together as usual, whether it be ashore or afloat." But Captain Cleresyte shook his head.

"We've got to consider facts, Charles. They don't allow much of a pension in this line. I shan't be able to afford a man-servant."

"But I don't want any pay, sir, bless my life!"

"What about your wife and your home, Charles? You've told me all about them, remember. You couldn't have her go on the parish; they wouldn't have it. No, no, Charles, duty's duty, and you've got to fulfil the natural law. You've to work for her as long as you live, unless you've saved something."

"Saved!" Charles's voice was sarcastic. As captain's steward he drew four pounds a month; had he looked out for chances, had he accepted offered promotions, he might ere this have been chief steward, with a big salary and a comfortable bonus. But that meagre four pounds a month had not allowed of saving, especially as his wife demanded all he earned.

"But I couldn't bear to serve another man, sir," he protested. "He'd call me old-fashioned; he'd want a younger man, sir. I'm old, like you, and I'm not up to date. You'd better think it over." But again Cleresyte shook his head.

"I'm taking rooms in the country, Charles," he said, sorrowfully. "I daren't live in sight of the sea; it wouldn't be healthy for me. In the place I've chosen there's no room for another man; besides, you couldn't live on air. No, no; we'll have to part, Charles. But you'll see me at times; I shall always watch the *Lohengrin* out of the river on sailing days, and you'll be aboard her, so we'll be able to have a chat at times about what's gone before. Isn't that the dinner bugle?"

II

THE night before the *Lohengrin* reached port Charles signalized the approaching parting in a somewhat peculiar manner. A big, bullying braggart of a saloon steward had been sharply reprimanded by the captain for leaving a tray of dishes in the companionway; with this chiding working in his mind the bully had expressed himself in no very flattering terms, painting the captain's character in fluent profanity.

"He's just a doddering old fool," he snarled. "He oughter have been put in a hammick an' chucked overboard twenty year since."

Then immediately sparks shot before his obscured vision, his head struck the deck violently, and Charles was there before him—Charles, who had heard every word.

"Get up and I'll do it again," panted the captain's "boy" angrily. "Or else say you're sorry."

The bully was not a coward, and had the courage of his convictions. He rose with the snort of a maddened bull and charged at Charles, to be met with a second slogging blow, surprising in a man of the "boy's" age. Then the battle closed in grim, deadly earnest, and it was not until the arrival of the second steward and master-at-arms that the pair were disengaged.

"All the same, if he says anything about Captain Cleresyte I'll do it again," cried Charles, defiantly. "Tell him to apologize." The bully, battered of face, apologized abjectly, but hinted darkly of consequences.

"Wait till I catch you in the dark!" he threatened. Charles smiled serenely out of a somewhat damaged mouth.

"Reckon that debt is getting evened up," he ruminated, thinking of forty years before. "But I'd like—I'd like to pay it back in full. Where'd I have been if it hadn't been for him?" His voice was purely reverent as he spoke of the skipper. "I'd have been a drunken swab; yes, no good to any man. But I'll pay it back yet, although I've waited forty

years for a chance and it hasn't come." Then he remembered the long association was to be broken, and sighed as he thought how small were the chances of ever making good his word.

If the skipper noticed the slightly altered mouth and the signs of trouble on Charles's face he made no comment. But these things have a way of leaking out, and before the *Lohengrin* docked at Liverpool, Cleresyte was in full possession of the facts of the case. He sighed a little in his turn, and decided to bestir himself in Charles's behalf.

" I'll put in a word to the shore steward," he said to his " boy " before he turned in for the night. " He'll see to it that you're kept on here. I'll speak to the new captain too, Charles, and try to get him to keep you on in your old berth."

" Beg your pardon, sir, but I'd rather not. If I can't serve you, Captain Cleresyte, I'd not take kindly to a new man. I'm old, as I said before, and I'm not so active as I might be. No, sir, thank you kindly, but I'd rather leave the ship."

" But what in heaven's name do you intend to do, then ? " asked Captain Cleresyte, and his voice was strangely husky. The old servant's devotion touched his heart ; almost passionately he wished for a chance to give him the position he desired, near himself.

" I'll get some sort of employment on shore, don't fear," said the " boy." " Oh, bless you, sir, there's lots of little jobs to be found if a man's willing. I'll be all right." But the skipper, looking at the lined, care-worn face before him, thought disconsolately of the chances of employment likely to fall in the way of a man of sixty-five, who had served all his time at sea.

" I'll sleep on it," he said at last, and turned in.

The result was a conversation with the marine surveyor. To him Captain Cleresyte put the case in detail.

" Can't you manage to give him a small pension ? " he said. " He's served the company well and faithfully. You say I've earned my pension ; well, I shouldn't have done if Charles hadn't been with me."

" It's strictly against all rules and regulations," said the superintendent. " If we give a pension to one man there'll be a hundred along within an hour, all with claims as good as Syzer's. No, captain, we daren't make an exception."

" But can't something be done ? It seems a sin to turn the old chap loose on the world after using forty years of his life and more. He thinks he'll get a living, but I know better. Can't something be done ? " The superintendent, remembering what Cleresyte had done to uphold the prestige of the Legend Line, thought the matter over. Then a smile came to his lips.

" I know," he said. " We'll create a berth for him. Out of all precedent, of course, but still, seeing who you are, and who Syzer is, we might stretch a point. Yes ; suppose we find we require a sort of secondary overseeing steward—a walking-boss kind of thing. He can get his pound a week regularly, and he'll be in amongst the life he's been accustomed to. A pound a week won't break the company ; they paid a fifteen per cent. dividend this year. Yes, that's what we'll do. He can potter about the docks, and board the ships as they come in, and look after the marks on the linen or something of the sort. Then he can get a meal in the pantry whenever he feels like it, and if the butchers happen to give him a spare joint from the freezing chambers, I don't suppose anyone will kick at it. But mind you, it's for you we're doing it, and if he forgets himself he'll be kicked out."

" And I'm doing it for Charles," said Cleresyte. " It's dashed good of you, Mortimer ; I'll never forget it. If ever I can oblige you in any way you've only to mention it."

And so the good news was announced to Charles, who heard it with misty eyes. He had resigned himself hopelessly to looking for work, and in spite of his cheerful assumption he shrank from the heart-breaking task. But now he was a made man, he said ; if he could not serve the captain he loved, he could at least prove himself worthy of the trust reposed in him by that captain.

But it may be that something moist fell in among the folded uniforms as Charles carefully placed them in a tight tin box. It was for the last time, he said, the last time. He touched them with shaking, tender fingers, and saw no light before him.

Never again would he smooth those well-remembered garments, never dry the soaking skirts of the great-coat, after a bitter night's exposure to the western storms ; no longer furbish up the salt-corroded buttons, that the master he loved might vie with even the sprucest and latest-joined

officer in point of smartness ; no, all that was done with now. Another would step into his place, even as another was stepping into the captain's place ; they were old, old men, with the days of their fighting behind them ; naught now remained save to sing the " Nunc Dimittis," and let the end come when it might, come soon rather than late, for they were both weary.

" I can't bear to look at them, Charles," said Cleresyte soberly, as he glanced at the orderly array of clothing in the trunk. " If I had them with me I'd always be taking them out and looking at them. It wouldn't be good for me. It might make me envious of another man's good fortune. I'd be going off to the directors and asking them to forget the conditions, and take me into their service again. No, I won't take the uniforms home. We'll see one of the riggers, and ask him if he's got a spare corner in one of his lofts, and stow them away there. Best not to keep them where they'll cause me to remember." Charles shouldered the weighty trunk, and staggered ashore. He puffed a little as he laid the burden down on the wharf ; time and again was he reminded that the days of his youth were fled.

The foreman rigger promised to stow the clothes away in the warmest, dryest corner of his loft, and there Charles carried the chest. Then he waited. Captain Cleresyte was making a round of farewells ; men whom he had brought from adolescence to supreme manhood, clear-eyed men, heroes in their calling, they all or nearly all had passed under his hands at one time or another, and not one amongst them but was proud to acknowledge the debt. Cleresyte had been the making of other men besides Charles ; he had sought religiously for the good in them all ; had found it, deeply buried, perhaps, and had brought it to the surface. There were men who traced their success from the moment when they came under the old skipper's benign influence, and they thronged about him heartily, offering hospitality here, holding out untold gifts there. Captains of crack liners, shore skippers, Board of Trade surveyors—they all had a kindly word for the departing veteran. And Charles stood alone on the fringe of the crowd, watching his hero and waiting his time.

Ay, but he waited to some effect, for his was the last hand the captain took.

" Good-bye, Charles. Cheer up, man ; I'll be seeing you often. Once a month I'll come in to town, and watch the old ship sail. That's my one recreation. Good-bye, my lad ; you've been a faithful servant, and I shan't forget you."

Charles could hardly believe his ears—could scarcely realize that his own hand had been crushed in the skipper's grasp. Was ever such condescension known !

He said something throatily, with the tears near his eyes ; then, to hide his emotion, he shouldered the portable baggage, which tasked his strength to its utmost, and followed Captain Cleresyte to his cab. As the four-wheeler drove away Charles drew his hand across his eyes.

" No chance of paying off that there debt now," he groaned. " But I meant to—honest, I meant to."

He reflected, however, that since a concrete repayment was out of the question, the best he could do in that way was to give a diligent and faithful service in his new vocation. He did so ; he won praises from all who saw his work. He knew a hundred ins and outs of his own particular trade ; there were invaluable hints to be gathered from his lips, and gradually he came to be regarded as something of an authority. And so a year went by ; a dull enough year for Charles, relieved by splashes of brightness once a month, when Cleresyte forsook his country retreat, and came to gaze, with his heart in his eyes, on the traffic-filled tide of the Mersey. And always there was a kindly word for Charles, always a grip of the hand at parting ; a friendly interest shown in his welfare—be sure that nothing ever stood in the way of the old captain's " boy," when he heard that his beloved master was to be seen on the dock.

III

A RINGING of bells, a creaking of ropes, hoarse shouts of warning, the thudding splash of rapidly-rotating propellers. A crowd pressing forward to gaze at the gallant craft, as she rode proudly alongside the stage, excited whispers, then—a hurrying to and fro on the deck high above—a white-faced steward appearing at the open gangway ; an officer speeding to the stage, with a curious look in his eye.

" Half-past four—cast off ! " shouted the marine superintendent.

" Hold on, sir ! " cried the officer. " Hold on ; something's happened. The captain ——"

People crushed back on themselves as the belaced man forced his way to the superintendent's side. Those nearest heard him speaking in hurried whispers:

"Captain James took a fit just as he was going on the bridge, sir. The surgeon says it's as bad as it can be; he must go ashore at once, and be taken to hospital. The ship can't sail yet, sir."

"What's that? The ship's *got* to sail. Haven't we a reputation to keep up? Of course, the ship must sail. Go aboard and tell the surgeon to send the captain ashore at once. Myers"—his attendant touched his cap—"go to the telephone office and ring up the ambulance. And—never mind—I'll come aboard."

The case was as bad as it well could be. Captain James was quite unconscious; the chief officer was a youngish man, but newly appointed. He had never sailed in command of a ship; the coming voyage was as perilous as any of the year, if not more so. The superintendent said that nothing remained save for him to take charge of the ship himself, and make the voyage in command. But up in the Clyde yards a new leviathan was building, a ship that was to teach the world what Britain still had power to do; the superintendent's presence was required there almost at once. Then he remembered.

He walked to the rail as the men of the *Lohengrin* carried the unconscious body reverently ashore. Well to the front of the crowds he spied a well-known figure—a white-bearded man, erect, and ruddy of countenance. To this figure he waved his hand, and sprang down the gangway hot-foot.

"How long will it take you to get ready, Captain Cleresyte?" he asked, and told the old fellow what had happened.

"Half an hour. I left my overcoat up at the station, and I can buy a change of underclothing at the nearest shop. Do you want me to make the voyage then?"

"Yes, there's no other way. As quick as you can, please. The Board of Trade man is aboard still; he'll attend to altering the articles. Sorry to put you to this trouble, but it's unavoidable."

Neither man had noticed a peaked white face at Cleresyte's elbow. The moment the first word was spoken the man who owned the face had darted through the crowd and was running like a boy to the overhead station. Electric trains run swiftly; he reached the dock in an incredibly short space of time. What he had to do taxed his strength to the utmost, so that he was coughing and wheezing like a grampus as he gained the stage again. In the confusion he passed up the gangway unnoticed, and when Captain Cleresyte went to the captain's room to lay down his purchases, he found Charles in his usual place, holding out the uniform overcoat at arm's length in complete readiness.

"Why, Charles, how did you get here? I was afraid I'd have to make the voyage in plain clothes, but here you are; it seems like old times, doesn't it?"

"Yessir. There's a speck of mildew on the sleeve, sir—yessir, that's all right, sir. You'll have your tea when we've passed the Rock, sir?"

The late captain's boy, a smart youth of twenty, resented the advent of Charles, and said so, in language culled from Paradise Street. Him Charles abolished with one biting sentence that left the lad stunned and wholly envious.

"So you'd better go and peel 'taters," said Charles scathingly. "Ask the chief steward to give you a job at washing floors. I'm here, my son, and here I'll stick. Thank the Lord for all he's done for me. There might be a chance to pay back that debt yet."

When Cleresyte left the bridge and went below to the saloon, he thought the past year had been nothing but a bad dream. The brilliantly lit apartment was almost crowded, a score of well-remembered faces showed around the tables; but what made his old heart warm within him was the sight of Charles—old Charles—clad in a shabby livery jacket that he had coaxed from an old pantryman, standing erect and ready behind the chair at the head of the table.

"There wasn't time to ask, sir," said Charles, bending down, "so I just ordered the usual clear soup, fish, and underdone steak."

IV

THE thing happened in a snowstorm. For sixty years the Legend Line had made it their boast that they had never lost a passenger's life, and scarcely a single ship, but this voyage bade fair to prove their boast untruthful. It came about suddenly, as all great crises do. The voyage had been one long round of storm and stress; the

winds of heaven joined forces with a marvellous unanimity, to keep the *Lohengrin* back. The seas rose in might, and thrashed her painfully; the entire Atlantic seemed determined to take its revenge upon the speeding liner.

For day after day and for night after night Captain Cleresyte was on the bridge, and always, crouched under the lee of the chart-room, was Charles. No one seemed quite to know where the captain's "boy" slept in the infrequent intervals allowed for his rest, but it was currently rumoured that he reposed on the sill of the captain's door. One night, however, Captain Cleresyte was called in haste, and going down the alleyway to leeward, he stumbled over a prostrate form. It was Charles, who sat up, glassy-eyed, weary-looking. Seeing who had stumbled he gathered himself together and stood up.

"Go and turn in, man," said Cleresyte irritably. "You can't do any good there." But Charles evidently failed to hear the order above the shrill shriek of the wind as the door was opened; for an hour later, as Cleresyte crouched into his clothing and wished for day, there came to him his "boy" shivering and gaunt, but still bearing a mug of steaming cocoa.

"I wonder what I should do without you, Charles," said the skipper, gratefully. "If you must stay on the bridge get into the chart-room, where it's warm." But Charles knew that to seek the comfort and warmth of the chart-room meant somnolence and possible deafness to a call; so until the dawn showed wanly he crouched under the lee of the house and waited patiently. It was his idea of service.

And now, upon a day, the tragedy happened. A biting snow-squall was thundering out of the north, lifting bolts of stinging spray clean over the funnels. The wind gathered itself together for one cataclysmic assault, and flung solid chunks of the Atlantic thunderously against the stricken ship. Still, she behaved right craftily, for Captain Cleresyte humoured her with every trick that forty years at sea had taught him. Under ordinary conditions the *Lohengrin* stood every chance of fighting a winning battle with the raging assault of the storm.

To be sure she was engaged in a struggle that tried her to the utmost of her power. A tremendous wave struck her to windward, and smashed in the doors of the superstructure as if they had been merely paper, and it took the carpenter's crew the best part of two hours to rig temporary repairs. The entire range of cabins to windward were swamped; bewildered passengers drifted out of their sleeping rooms into the lighted main saloon, and wondered what the night should bring. Everywhere was great unrest, much bodily discomfort, but not a soul was really afraid. They knew Captain Cleresyte of old; they knew he had confidence in himself, and they were confident that out of evil good must come. On the high bridge, peering through the snow-whirls with smarting eyes, Cleresyte himself stood, proudly erect, thrilling to the vigour of the gale.

"This flurry will end it, I expect," he croaked to the chief officer. "It'll take off in an hour or so. But send a couple of extra men to the look-out, there might be sailing ships about, and we mustn't run them down."

The whistle of the officer that was to summon a deck-hand, was still thrilling through the uproar, when out of the crested grey that was the sea there sprang a livid deadly thing. Nothing human could guard against such a menace. She had once been a stately ship, a thing of beauty, gallant and bold, manned by sterling men, trading to the uttermost ends of the earth. But a change had come over her in the flight of years; her tall masts had fallen, seas had breached her, she had been abandoned by the men who boasted of her prowess, and left to die alone. The currents of the sea swept her hither and thither; she gathered gulf weed about her hull, the trailing ropes seemed like the clutching arms of some greedy octopus. For twenty years she had drifted harmless, scorched by tropical suns, frozen by arctic winds, until now—when she lifted her slugging derelict length right before the *Lohengrin's* impetuous forefoot.

"Hard a-starboard!" yelled Cleresyte, who had seen what was coming, and the chief officer raced to the telegraph. It was too late. Long before the hissing pistons could turn the rudder, long before the clanking bells could echo in the engine room, the work had been done. The *Lohengrin* flung herself madly on the cowering thing that dipped before her advance, rose up again and ripped the bottom from her from bow to engine-room. The shuddering shock, the horrid, grinding tear of severed steel, sounded above the storm, the death-

cry of a gallant ship. And all who heard or felt that terrible blow knew that the *Lohengrin* had sailed her last voyage.

"Tell the carpenter to sound the wells at once," cried Cleresyte. "She's got it, I'm afraid, but we'll do our best. Call all hands on deck, clear away the boats. Thank God! we haven't our full complement of passengers. And the storm's breaking."

All was done with that orderliness that characterises the work of our British seamen. The quarter-masters formed a line across the deck, and held back the raving steerage passengers; the younger officers besought the more responsible saloon passengers to be calm. The deck hands worked gallantly, boat after boat was swung out, provisioned, and lowered to the rail. Only once was there a rush, and a dozen levelled revolvers crushed that at its outset.

"Nine feet for'ard, sir," reported the carpenter. "Making water fast." And on the heels of his report came a voice up the engine-room telephone: "Fires out, engines stopped. Waiting orders."

Yes, the *Lohengrin* had run her race, and the end had come. They could tell that by the sudden lurching of her, the sick heave, the horrible sucking sound of inrushing water everywhere. Never again would she walk the waters like a living thing; never again would she bear in her hull the proud and the gay, the bold and the brave. She was doomed; and all that remained was to make her end as dignified as her life demanded.

"All hands abandon ship!" cried Cleresyte, and his voice never faltered. "Women and children first. Quickly, but without confusion. You have ten minutes to get everybody clear."

They wrapped the shivering women in blankets, and lifted them carefully into the boats. The children followed, then the older men of the passengers, then the younger; the crew followed in their turn. Soon not a soul remained aboard the *Lohengrin* save the chief officer and the captain himself, both standing on the navigating bridge.

"Go, Graham," said Cleresyte. "She's near her end now." Above the clamour of storm came a pealing voice from the last boat: "Room for one more only."

All the rest of the boats had gone, lowered away into something that might, by a stretch of the imagination, have been called safety. But Cleresyte knew his Atlantic, as well as he knew his rule of the road. Within an hour, he said, the storm would have died away. To be sure a fog would follow, but calm seas would follow that, and the liner's boats would be right in the track of the shipping. They were well loaded, not overloaded. But the last boat was full of the crew; and they, being sailors, had crowded close. The addition of another man might not render her position precarious; the addition of two might well mean her doom.

"Steer away from the vortex, get the boats together, throw out sea-anchors from the first four, and make a breakwater for the rest," said the skipper, hurriedly. "You'll be picked up before night, please God."

"Come, sir," insisted the chief officer, "I'll stay behind; I'm a younger man than you."

"That's just why you must go," insisted Cleresyte. "You've got a wife and children, you told me; you owe them a duty. Go, my lad, and God be with you." The voice from the boat came again, insistent, with alarm in its accents. "Hurry, sir, room for one more."

"Then, good-bye, sir," said the chief officer, chokingly, and held out his hand. But before he went to the waiting boat he ran to the door of the cabins.

"Anybody left behind?" he cried loudly. There was no answer; he cried again and thought he heard a sound. But when he yelled for the third time all was silence.

"Expect it was a rat," he said; "they'd have searched everywhere." And he went to the last boat.

The *Lohengrin* lifted herself proudly, as though to make a last fight against the appalling odds; she slugged back inertly, and the boat pushed off.

"Get away quickly from the vortex," said the chief mate, as he took the tiller. "She's sinking now." The fog and snow curled down to hide the smitten monster from sight; the boats vanished in the whiteness, the storm spat itself out into muttering restlessness, and Captain Cleresyte was left alone on the liner's bridge.

V

FOR long minutes he stood there, drinking in the scene of misery and death. The ship had been like a familiar friend to him through many virile years; but even so he was not sufficient of a sentimentalist to have

stayed behind merely for that reason. He knew he had done his work well, and not a soul could blame him. Duty demanded that he should be the last man to leave, but that duty he had done. It was simply that there was not room for him that he had stayed behind. Without him the boats might live; with him one must assuredly die. Rather than risk the life of one of those entrusted to him, he preferred to remain and face death stoically.

It was bitterly cold, even though the wind was dying down. A raw, reeking fog, through which the great snowflakes drifted giddily, had shut out the hungry sea, but from the feel of the deck he trod Cleresyte knew the end was very near. He walked slowly down to the main deck, and peered over the rail; the sea was lapping almost at his feet, and the *Lohengrin* fought silently for yet a few more seconds of life. Hard as she fought she could not put off the evil time much longer; and with a natural instinct to die as he had lived, Cleresyte climbed back to the bridge. It was canted at a sick angle—it shivered as he trod it; the cold was very keen.

He thought of his past life, and saw there a record of fighting. It was not a bad life to look back on; he had done his duty fearlessly, and some little things had been done that brought a grateful glow to his heart.

He turned as the ladder of the bridge shook, and then started back with unbelief written all across his face. A bent and weary figure was climbing to the bridge—a curious figure, with a bare, white head protruding from a thick fur-lined coat that had once been a millionaire's. And this figure carried something carefully—something concealed in a cloth.

"Your coffee, sir," said Charles unmovedly, and removed the cloth to disclose a steaming mugful of the fragrant beverage.

Heaven knows where he had collected dry sticks enough to kindle a fire. Heaven knows how, amongst the orderly confusion of the ship's abandoning, he had been able to pass unnoticed about his work. But somehow or other, having heard from the lee of the chart-house, where he had stowed himself away, that Cleresyte was determined to stay, he had construed the meaning of his duty to be that he too should remain on board, to minister to his master's last requirements. And here he was, capable as ever, bearing that which might mean a few more minutes of life to the shivering captain. He watched his master drink the coffee with deeply interested eyes, that was all.

"Why didn't you go, Charles?"

"I thought you'd need someone to stay behind and look after you, sir. I'd have gone if you'd gone, sir."

"Then you're a fool—and a hero. But what about your wife and the children? Didn't you think of them? You owe them a duty, my lad."

"My wife's dead, sir, died six months since. My daughter's married and settled down; there's only the boy, and he'll fend for himself."

"That's very well; but since you're here, we might as well have a try for safety. Come along! look alive; there's no time to lose."

The big fur coat thumped on the steps of the bridge ladder as Charles followed the captain to the deck, and aft to the poop.

"There are some coops and gratings here, Charles. We'll see if we can't make a raft."

"Yes, sir," said Charles, and he buckled to. They worked like navvies, now the love of life had taken a new hold on their hearts. They threw the ponderous masses of wood to and fro as if they were weightless, lashed coop to grating, and hatch-cover to all, until they had made a formidable structure. The water was lapping over the liner's coop as they finished; there was no time for more. Only by reason of her water-tight compartments had she floated so long. As it was the ship sank beneath the raft, on which they flung themselves, and the suction dragged them down deep into the bowels of the sea.

They came up gasping and spent, looking one another in the face as men who have looked on death. Then, after ten minutes of agony, they settled down to wait for what the hours might bring.

The hours brought cold and hunger: such cold as neither men had ever known—hunger that gnawed remorselessly. From time to time they roused themselves, and shook their bodies to and fro, striking their arms across their chests, trying by all means in their power to keep the sluggish blood circulating in some measure. Full day had come long before, but they scarcely heeded it now. They seldom spoke; words seemed so useless.

The time went very slowly now, yet every slow minute brought them a still more bitter cold. Gradually a strange

inertia overcame the skipper; he sank back with a groan, and lay motionless on the raft.

Charles shook him angrily and swore aloud, bidding him be a man and maintain the fight for life; reluctantly the captain came back to his senses, and beat upon his chest once more. As he opened his eyes Charles took off his fur coat and tried to fold it about his figure, but Cleresyte would have none of it. He resisted strongly, and the effort did him good, restored the circulation, brought a trifling glow to his heart.

"Keep it yourself," he said loudly. "You need it. I've got my great-coat. I'm not very cold. Understand, Charles, I order you to keep it."

"Very well, sir," said Charles meekly, and put on the garment again.

The day passed, and night drew down. Captain Cleresyte was fast becoming the victim of a growing drowsiness; a listless languor obsessed him; he cared not whether he lived or died. Charles shook him again and again, but the captain did not move.

"Very well, sir," said Charles weakly, for a great pain was growing in his lungs; "you can't order me not to now."

Yet, since he was no hero as heroism is counted to-day, it required an actual struggle with himself to enable him to part with the warm fur coat. Twice he took it off and twice again donned it, snuggling down into the warmth of it with gratitude. Then he remembered his debt. With set lips and chattering teeth, he divested himself of the coat once more, and folded it closely about Captain Cleresyte's inanimate figure. Then he lay down beside his master, and took the figure in his arms, that the fleeting warmth of his body might pass to the man he loved.

"This ought to settle that debt," he said weakly. "My, but it's cold."

The tramp steamer *Oberon* slugged out of the growing light, an emissary of Fate. Ugly, rust-stained as she was, she yet had been selected as a messenger. Her second mate stumped on the bridge and cursed the slowness of his relief. Then he searched the surface of the sea.

"Looks like wreckage there," he muttered suddenly, groping for his glasses. "Starboard a point, Jack." The glasses were focused on a tangle of wood and cord that floated half a mile away.

"Yes, it is wreckage, and there's men on it," said the second mate. "Call the skipper, one of you men." One of the men who were scrubbing the bridge, laid his broom against the rail and departed, to return with the pyjama-clad captain in his wake.

"Yes, they're men, sure enough," said the skipper. "Lower a boat and pick them up."

The second mate of the *Oberon* jumped aboard the wreckage, that dipped beneath his weight. He saw two figures, one clad in a meagre steward's dress, the other warmly wrapped in a great fur-lined overcoat.

"Looks like the skipper, but I can't account for the steward," said the second mate. "These chaps are generally the first to clear out. Let's see." He gently disengaged the clinging arms of the steward, and felt inside the great fur coat.

"This one's alive," was his verdict. "The other's dead. Lift them both into the boat."

Charles had paid his debt.

The Art of Living

THERE are moments in life worth purchasing with worlds.—*H. Fielding.*

THERE is no wealth but Life—Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration.—*J. Ruskin.*

ONE'S real life is so often the life that one does not lead.—*Oscar Wilde.*

LIFE is like a tale; what makes it of value is not its length but its goodness. —*Seneca.*

THAT I have lived on good terms with so many good people gives me more pleasure than any other reflection.—*Sydney Smith.*

DRACULA

By

The Weirdest and most

Count Dracula, a semi-legendary being, possessed of uncanny powers, and to whom rumour ascribes the practices of a "vampire," has inveigled Jonathan Harker, a solicitor's clerk, to his castle in the heart of the Carpathian mountains, where, after warning him of the dangers of his position, he leaves him to an uncertain fate.

The Count then seeks new lairs in Europe, and a further train of mysterious happenings is set in operation. The crew of a Russian vessel the "Demeter," are, one by one, demoniacally assaulted and thrown

Letter, Sister Agatha, Hospital of St. Joseph and Ste. Mary, Buda-Pesth, to Miss Wilhelmina Murray

"August 12.

"DEAR Madam,—

"I write by desire of Mr. Jonathan Harker, who is himself not strong enough to write, though progressing well, thanks to God and St. Joseph and Ste. Mary. He has been under our care for nearly six weeks, suffering from a violent brain fever. He wishes me to convey his love, and to say that by this post I write for him to Mr. Peter Hawkins, Exeter, to say, with his dutiful respects, that he is sorry for his delay, and that all his work is completed. He will require some few weeks' rest in our sanatorium in the hills, but will then return. He wishes me to say that he has not sufficient money with him, and that he would like to pay for his staying here, so that others who need shall not be wanting for help.

"Believe me,

"Yours, with sympathy and all blessings,

"SISTER AGATHA.

"P.S.—My patient being asleep, I open this to let you know something more. He has told me all about you, and that you are shortly to be his wife. All blessings to you both! He has had some fearful shock—so says our doctor—and in his delirium his ravings have been dreadful; of wolves and poison and blood; of ghosts and demons; and I fear to say of what. Be careful with him always that there may be nothing to excite him of this kind for a long time to come; the traces of such an illness as his do not lightly die away. We should have written long ago, but we knew nothing of his friends, and there was on him nothing that any one could understand. He came in the train from Klausenburg, and the guard was told by the station-master there that he rushed into the station shouting for a ticket for home. Seeing from his violent demeanour that he was English, they gave him a ticket for the furthest station on the way thither that the train reached.

"Be assured that he is well cared for. He has won all hearts by his sweetness and gentleness. He is truly getting on well, and I have no doubt will in a few weeks be all himself."

DR. SEWARD'S DIARY

August 19.—Strange and sudden change in Renfield last night. About eight o'clock he began to get excited and to sniff about as a dog does when setting. The attendant was struck by his manner, and knowing my interest in him, encouraged him to talk. He is usually respectful to the attendant, and at times servile; but to-night, the man tells me, he was quite haughty. All he would say was:

"I don't want to talk to you: you don't count now; the Master is at hand."

The attendant thinks it is some sudden form of religious mania which has seized him. If so, we must look out for squalls, for a strong man with homicidal and religious mania at once might be dangerous. The combination is a dreadful one. At nine o'clock I visited him myself. His attitude to me was the same as that to the attendant; in his sublime self-feeling the difference between myself and attendant seemed to him as nothing. It looks like religious mania, and he will soon think that he himself is God. These infinitesimal distinctions between man and man are too paltry for an Omnipotent Being. How these madmen give themselves away! The real God taketh heed lest a sparrow fall; but the God created from human vanity sees no difference between an eagle and a sparrow. Oh, if men only knew!

For half an hour or more Renfield kept getting excited in greater and greater degree. I did not pretend to be watching him, but I kept strict observation all the same. All at once that shifty look came into his eyes which we always see when a madman has seized an idea, and with it the shifty movement of the head and back which asylum attendants come to know so well. He became quite quiet, and went and sat on the edge of his bed resignedly, and looked into space with lack-lustre eyes. I thought I would find out if his apathy were real or only assumed, and tried to lead him to talk of his pets. At first he made no reply, but at length said testily:

"Bother them all! I don't care a pin about them."

"What?" I said. "You don't mean to tell me that you don't care about spiders?"

BRAM STOKER

Powerful Story ever written

overboard, and, when the vessel arrives at Whitby during a terrific storm, only the dead captain is found on board, lashed to the wheel.

Meanwhile Miss Lucy Westenra, a close friend of Miss Mina Murray, Jonathan Harker's fiancée, falls seriously ill and walks in her sleep, apparently at the mesmeric bidding of a shadowy, red-eyed stranger. Her symptoms completely baffle Dr. Seward, who is also disturbed by the "life-eating" habits of a mental patient, Renfield. News is at last heard of Jonathan Harker.

(Spiders at present are his hobby, and the note-book is filling up with columns of small figures.) To this he answered enigmatically:

"The bride-maidens rejoice the eyes that wait the coming of the bride; but when the bride draweth nigh, then the maidens shine not to the eyes that are filled."

He would not explain himself, but remained obstinately seated on his bed.

¶

I AM weary to-night and low in spirits. I cannot but think of Lucy, and how different things might have been. If I don't sleep at once, chloral, the modern Morpheus—$C_2HCl_3O \cdot H_2O$! I must be careful not to let it grow into a habit. No, I shall take none to-night!

Glad I made the resolution; gladder that I kept to it. I had lain tossing about, and had heard the clock strike only twice, when the night-watchman came to me, sent up from the ward, to say that Renfield had escaped. I threw on my clothes and ran down at once; my patient is too dangerous a person to be roaming about. Those ideas of his might work out dangerously with strangers. The attendant was waiting for me. He said he had seen him not ten minutes before, seemingly asleep in his bed, when he had looked through the observation-trap in the door. His attention was called by the sound of the window being wrenched out. He ran back and saw his feet disappear through the window, and had at once sent up for me. He was only in his night-gear, and cannot be far off. The attendant thought it would be more useful to watch where he should go than to follow him, as he might lose sight of him whilst getting out of the building by the door. He is a bulky man, and couldn't get through the window. I am thin, so, with his aid, I got out, but feet foremost, and, as we were only a few feet above ground, landed unhurt. The attendant told me the patient had gone to the left and had taken a straight line, so I ran as quickly as I could. As I got through the belt of trees I saw a white figure scale the high wall which separates our grounds from those of the deserted house.

I ran back at once, and told the watchman to get three or four men immediately, and follow me into the grounds of Carfax, in case our friend might be dangerous. I got a ladder myself, and crossing the wall, dropped down on the other side. I could see Renfield's figure just disappearing behind the angle of the house, so I ran after him. On the far side of the house I found him pressed close against the old iron-bound oak door of the chapel. He was apparently talking to someone, but I was afraid to go near enough to hear what he was saying, lest I might frighten him, and he should run off.

Chasing an errant swarm of bees is nothing to following a naked lunatic when the fit of escaping is upon him! After a few minutes, however, I could see that he did not take note of anything around him, and so ventured to draw nearer to him—the more so as my men had now crossed the wall and were closing him in. I heard him say:

"I am here to do Your bidding, Master. I am Your slave, and You will reward me, for I shall be faithful. I have worshipped You long and afar off. Now that you are near, I await Your commands, and You will not pass me by, will You, dear Master, in Your distribution of good things?"

He *is* a selfish old beggar anyhow. He thinks of the loaves and fishes even when he believes he is in a Real Presence. His manias make a startling combination. When we closed in on him he fought like a tiger. He is immensely strong, and he was more like a wild beast than a man. I never saw a lunatic in such a paroxysm of rage before; and I hope I shall not again. It is a mercy that we have found out his strength and his danger in good time. With strength and determination like his, he might have done wild work before he was caged. He is safe now at any rate. Jack Sheppard himself couldn't get free from the strait-waistcoat that keeps him restrained, and he's chained to the wall in the padded room. His cries are at times awful, but the silences that follow are more deadly still, for he means murder in every movement.

Just now he spoke coherent words:

"I shall be patient, Master. It is coming—coming—coming!"

So I took the hint, and came too. I was too excited to sleep, but this diary has quieted me, and I feel I shall get some sleep to-night.

CHAPTER IX

Letter, Mina Harker to Lucy Westenra

" Buda-Pesth, August 24.

"MY DEAREST LUCY,—

" I know you will be anxious to hear all that has happened since we parted at the railway station at Whitby. Well, my dear, I got to Hull all right, and caught the boat to Hamburg, and then the train on here. I feel I can hardly recall anything of the journey, except that I knew I was coming to Jonathan, and that, as I should have to do some nursing, I had better get all the sleep I could. . . . I found my dear one, oh, so thin, and pale and weak-looking. All the resolution has gone out of his dear eyes, and that quiet dignity which I told you was in his face has vanished. He is only a wreck of himself, and he does not remember anything that has happened to him for a long time past. At least, he wants me to believe so, and I shall never ask. He has had some terrible shock, and I fear it might tax his poor brain if he were to try to recall it. Sister Agatha, who is a good creature and a born nurse, tells me that he raved of dreadful things whilst he was off his head. I wanted her to tell me what they were ; but she would only cross herself, and say she would never tell ; that the ravings of the sick were the secrets of God, and that if a nurse through her vocation should hear them, she should respect her trust. She is a sweet, good soul, and the next day, when she saw I was troubled, she opened up the subject again, and after saying that she could never mention what my poor dear raved about, added : ' I can tell you this much, my dear : that it was not about anything which he has done wrong himself ; and you, as his wife to be, have no cause to be concerned. He has not forgotten you or what he owes to you. His fear was of great and terrible things, which no mortal can treat of.' I do believe the dear soul thought I might be jealous lest my poor dear should have fallen in love with any other girl. The idea of *my* being jealous about Jonathan ! And yet, my dear, let me whisper, I felt a thrill of joy through me when I *knew* that no other woman was a cause of trouble. I am now sitting by his bedside, where I can see his face while he sleeps. He is waking ! . . , When he woke he asked me for his coat, as he wanted to get something from the pocket ; I asked Sister Agatha, and she brought all his things. I saw that amongst them was his notebook, and was going to ask him to let me look at it—for I knew then that I might find some clue to his trouble —but I suppose he must have seen my wish in my eyes, for he sent me over to the window, saying he wanted to be quite alone for a moment. Then he called me back, and when I came he had his hand over the notebook, and he said to me very solemnly :

" ' Wilhelmina '—I knew then that he was in deadly earnest, for he has never called me by that name since he asked me to marry him— ' you know, dear, my ideas of the trust between husband and wife : there should be no secret, no concealment. I have had a great shock, and when I try to think of what it is I feel my head spin round, and I do not know if it was all real or the dreaming of a madman. You know I have had brain fever, and that is to be mad. The secret is here, and I do not want to know it. I want to take up my life here, with our marriage.' For, my dear, we had decided to be married as soon as the formalities are complete. ' Are you willing, Wilhelmina, to share my ignorance ? Here is the book. Take it and keep it, read it if you will, but never let me know ; unless, indeed, some solemn duty should come upon me to go back to the bitter hours, asleep or awake, sane or mad, recorded here.' He fell back exhausted, and I put the book under his pillow, and kissed him. I have asked Sister Agatha to beg the Superior to let our wedding be this afternoon, and am waiting her reply. . . .

" She has come and told me that the chaplain of the English mission church has been sent for. We are to be married in an hour, or as soon after as Jonathan awakes. . . .

" Lucy, the time has come and gone. I feel very solemn, but very, very happy. Jonathan woke a little after the hour, and all was ready, and he sat up in bed, propped up with pillows. He answered his ' I will ' firmly and strongly. I could hardly speak ; my heart was so full that even those words seemed to choke me. The dear Sisters were so kind. Please God, I shall never, never forget them, nor the grave and sweet responsibilities I have taken upon me. I must tell you of my wedding present. When the chaplain and the Sisters had left me alone with my husband—oh, Lucy, it is the first time I have written the words ' my husband '—left me alone with my husband, I took the book from under his pillow, and wrapped it up in white paper, and tied it with a little bit of pale blue ribbon which was round my neck, and sealed it over the knot with sealing-wax, and for my seal I used my wedding ring. Then I kissed it and showed it to my husband, and told him that I would keep it so, and then it would be an outward and visible sign for us all our lives that we trusted each other ; that I would never open it unless it were for his own dear sake or for the sake of some stern duty. Then he took my hand in his, and oh, Lucy, it was the first time he took *his wife's* hand, and said that it was the dearest thing in all the wide world, and that he would go through all the past again to win it if need be. The poor dear meant to say more ; but he cannot think of time yet.

"Well, my dear, what could I say? I could only tell him that I was the happiest woman in all the wide world, and that I had nothing to give him except myself, my life, and my trust, and that with these went my love and duty for all the days of my life. And, my dear, when he kissed me, and drew me to him with his poor weak hands, it was like a very solemn pledge.

"Lucy dear, do you know why I tell you all this? It is not only because it is all sweet to me, but because you have been, and are, very dear to me. It was my privilege to be your friend and guide when you came from the school-room to prepare for the world of life. I want you to see now, and with the eyes of a very happy wife, whither duty has led me; so that in your own married life you too may be all happy as I am. My dear, please Almighty God, your life may be all it promises: a long day of sunshine, with no harsh wind, no forgetting duty, no distrust. I must not wish you no pain, for that can never be; but I do hope you will be *always* as happy as I am *now*. Good-bye, my dear. I shall post this at once, and write you very soon again. I must stop, for Jonathan is waking—I must attend to my husband!

"Your ever-loving

"MINA HARKER."

Letter, Lucy Westenra to Mina Harker

"*Whitby, August* 30.

"My dearest Mina,—

"Oceans of love and millions of kisses, and may you soon be in your own home with your husband. I wish you could be coming home soon enough to stay with us here. This strong air would soon restore Jonathan; it has quite restored me. I have an appetite like a cormorant, am full of life, and sleep well. You will be glad to know that I have quite given up walking in my sleep. I think I have not stirred out of my bed for a week, that is, when I once got into it at night. Arthur says I am getting fat. By the way, I forgot to tell you that Arthur is here. We have such walks and drives, and rides, and rowing, and tennis, and fishing together; and I love him more than ever. He *tells me* that he loves me more, but I doubt that, for at first he told me that he couldn't love me more than he did then. But this is nonsense. There he is, calling to me. So no more just at present from your loving LUCY.

"P.S.—Mother sends her love. She seems better, poor dear.

"P.P.S.—We are to be married on September 28."

DR. SEWARD'S DIARY

August 20.—The case of Renfield grows even more interesting. He has now so far quieted that there are spells of cessation from his passion. For the first week after his attack he was perpetually violent. Then one night, just as the moon rose, he grew quiet, and kept murmuring to himself: "Now I can wait; now I can wait." The attendant came to tell me, so I ran down at once to have a look at him. He was still in the strait-waistcoat and in the padded room, but the suffused look had gone from his face, and his eyes had something of their old pleading—I might almost say "cringing"—softness. I was satisfied with his present condition, and directed him to be relieved. The attendants hesitated, but finally carried out my wishes without protest. It was a strange thing that the patient had humour enough to see their distrust, for, coming close to me, he said in a whisper, all the while looking furtively at them:

"They think I could hurt you! Fancy *me* hurting *you*! The fools!"

It was soothing, somehow, to the feelings to find myself dissociated even in the mind of this poor madman from the others; but all the same I do not follow his thought. Am I to take it that I have anything in common with him, so that we are, as it were, to stand together; or has he to gain from me some good so stupendous that my well-being is needful to him? I must find out later on. To-night he will not speak. Even the offer of a kitten or even a full-grown cat will not tempt him. He will only say: "I don't take any stock in cats. I have more to think of now, and I can wait; I can wait."

After a while I left him. The attendant tells me that he was quiet until just before dawn, and that then he began to get uneasy, and at length violent, until at last he fell into a paroxysm which exhausted him so that he swooned into a sort of coma.

. . . Three nights has the same thing happened—violent all day, then quiet from moon-rise to sunrise. I wish I could get some clue to the cause. It would almost seem as if there was some influence which came and went. Happy thought! We shall to-night play sane wits against mad ones. He escaped before without our help; to-night he shall escape with it. We shall give him a chance, and have the men ready to follow in case they are required. . . .

August 23.—"The unexpected always happens." How well Disraeli knew life! Our bird when he found the cage open would not fly, so all our subtle arrangements went for nought. At any rate, we have proved one thing: that the spells of quietness last a reasonable time. We shall in future be able to ease his bonds for a few hours each day. I have given orders to the night attendant merely to shut him in the padded room, when once he is quiet, until an hour before sunrise. The poor soul's body will enjoy the relief even if his mind cannot appreciate it. Hark! The unexpected again! I am called; the patient has once more escaped.

Later.—Another night adventure. Renfield artfully waited until the attendant was entering the room to inspect. Then he dashed out past him and flew down the passage. I sent word for the attendants to follow. Again he went into the grounds of the deserted house, and we found

him in the same place, pressed against the old chapel door. When he saw me he became furious, and had not the attendants seized him in time, he would have tried to kill me. As we were holding him a strange thing happened. He suddenly redoubled his efforts, and then as suddenly grew calm. I looked round instinctively, but could see nothing. Then I caught the patient's eye and followed it, but could trace nothing as it looked into the moonlit sky except a big bat, which was flapping its silent and ghostly way to the west. Bats usually wheel and flit about, but this one seemed to go straight on, as if it knew where it was bound for or had some intention of its own. The patient grew calmer every instant, and presently said:

"You needn't tie me; I shall go quietly!" Without trouble we came back to the house. I feel there is something ominous in his calm, and shall not forget this night. . . .

Lucy Westenra's Diary

Hillingham, August 24.—I must imitate Mina, and keep writing things down. Then we can have long talks when we do meet. I wonder when it will be. I wish she were with me again, for I feel so unhappy. Last night I seemed to be dreaming again just as I was at Whitby. Perhaps it is the change of air, or getting home again. It is all dark and horrid to me, for I can remember nothing; but I am full of vague fear, and I feel so weak and worn out. When Arthur came to lunch he looked quite grieved when he saw me, and I hadn't the spirit to try to be cheerful. I wonder if I could sleep in mother's room to-night. I shall make an excuse and try.

August 25.—Another bad night. Mother did not seem to take to my proposal. She seems not too well herself, and doubtless she fears to worry me. I tried to keep awake, and succeeded for a while; but when the clock struck twelve it waked me from a doze, so I must have been falling asleep. There was a sort of scratching or flapping at the window, but I did not mind it, and as I remember no more, I suppose I must then have fallen asleep. More bad dreams. I wish I could remember them. This morning I am horribly weak. My face is ghastly pale, and my throat pains me. It must be something wrong with my lungs, for I don't seem ever to get air enough. I shall try to cheer up when Arthur comes, or else I know he will be miserable to see me so.

Letter, Arthur Holmwood to Dr. Seward

"*Albemarle Hotel, August* 31.

"My dear Jack,—

"I want you to do me a favour. Lucy is ill; that is, she has no special disease, but she looks awful, and is getting worse every day. I have asked her if there is any cause; I do not dare to ask her mother, for to disturb the poor lady's mind about her daughter in her present state of health would be fatal. Mrs. Westenra has confided to me that her doom is spoken—disease of the heart—though poor Lucy does not know it yet. I am sure that there is something preying on my dear girl's mind. I am almost distracted when I think of her; to look at her gives me a pang. I told her I should ask you to see her, and though she demurred at first—I know why, old fellow—she finally consented. It will be a painful task for you, I know, old friend, but it is for *her* sake, and I must not hesitate to ask, or you to act. You are to come to lunch at Hillingham to-morrow, two o'clock, so as not to arouse any suspicion in Mrs. Westenra, and after lunch Lucy will take an opportunity of being alone with you. I shall come in for tea, and we can go away together. I am filled with anxiety, and want to consult with you alone as soon as I can after you have seen her. Do not fail!

"Arthur."

Telegram, Arthur Holmwood to Seward

"*September* 1.

"Am summoned to see my father, who is worse. Am writing. Write me fully by to-night's post to Ring. Wire me if necessary."

Letter from Dr. Seward to Arthur Holmwood

"My dear old fellow,— "*September* 2.

"With regard to Miss Westenra's health, I hasten to let you know at once that in my opinion there is not any functional disturbance or any malady that I know of. At the same time, I am not by any means satisfied with her appearance; she is woefully different from what she was when I saw her last. Of course you must bear in mind that I did not have full opportunity of examination such as I should wish; our very friendship makes a little difficulty which not even medical science or custom can bridge over. I had better tell you exactly what happened, leaving you to draw, in a measure, your own conclusions. I shall then say what I have done and propose doing.

"I found Miss Westenra in seemingly gay spirits. Her mother was present, and in a few seconds I made up my mind that she was trying all she knew to mislead her mother and prevent her from being anxious. I have no doubt she guesses, if she does not know, what need of caution there is. We lunched alone, and as we all exerted ourselves to be cheerful, we got, as some kind of reward for our labours, some real cheerfulness amongst us. Then Mrs. Westenra went to lie down, and Lucy was left with me. We went into her boudoir, and till we got there her gaiety remained, for the servants were coming and going. As soon as the door was closed, however, the mask fell from her face, and she sank down into a chair with a great sigh, and hid her eyes with her hand. When I saw that her high spirits had failed, I at once took advantage of her reaction to make a diagnosis. She said to me very sweetly:

" ' I cannot tell you how I loathe talking about myself.' I reminded her that a doctor's confidence was sacred, but that you were grievously anxious about her. She caught on to my meaning at once, and settled that matter in a word. ' Tell Arthur everything you choose. I do not care for myself, but all for him ! ' So I am quite free.

" I could easily see that she is somewhat bloodless, but I could not see the usual anæmic signs, and by a chance I was actually able to test the quality of her blood, for in opening a window which was stiff a cord gave way, and she cut her hand slightly with broken glass. It was a slight matter in itself, but it gave me an evident chance, and I secured a few drops of the blood and have analysed them. The qualitative analysis gives a quite normal condition, and shows, I should infer, in itself a vigorous state of health. In other physical matters I was quite satisfied that there is no need for anxiety ; but as there must be a cause somewhere, I have come to the conclusion that it must be something mental. She complains of difficulty in breathing satisfactorily at times, and of heavy, lethargic sleep, with dreams that frighten her, but regarding which she can remember nothing. She says that as a child she used to walk in her sleep, and that when in Whitby the habit came back, and that once she walked out in the night and went to the East Cliff, where Miss Murray found her ; but she assures me that of late the habit has not returned. I am in doubt, and so have done the best thing I know of ; I have written to my old friend and master, Professor Van Helsing, of Amsterdam, who knows as much about obscure diseases as anyone in the world. I have asked him to come over, and as you told me that all things were to be at your charge, I have mentioned to him who you are and your relations to Miss Westenra. This, my dear fellow, is only in obedience to your wishes, for I am only too proud and happy to do anything I can for her. Van Helsing would, I know, do anything for me for a personal reason. So, no matter on what ground he comes, we must accept his wishes. He is a seemingly arbitrary man, but this is because he knows what he is talking about better than anyone else. He is a philosopher and a metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientists of his day ; and he has, I believe, an absolutely open mind. This, with an iron nerve, a temper of the ice-brook, an indomitable resolution, self-command and toleration exalted from virtues to blessings, and the kindliest and truest heart that beats—these form his equipment for the noble work that he is doing for mankind—work both in theory and practice, for his views are as wide as his all-embracing sympathy. I tell you these facts that you may know why I have such confidence in him. I have asked him to come at once. I shall see Miss Westenra again to-morrow. She is to meet me at the stores, so that I may not alarm her mother by a too early repetition of my call.

" Yours always,

" JOHN SEWARD."

Letter, Abraham Van Helsing, M.D., Ph.D., D.Lit., etc. etc., to Dr. Seward

" My good Friend,— " *September 2.*

" When I have received your letter I am already coming to you. By good fortune I can leave just at once, without wrong to any of those who have trusted me. Were fortune other, then it were bad for those who have trusted, for I come to my friend when he call me to aid those he holds dear. Tell your friend that when that time you suck from my wound so swiftly the poison of the gangrene from that knife that our other friend, too nervous, let slip, you did more for him when he wants my aids and you call for them than all his great fortune could do. But it is pleasure added to do for him, your friend ; it is to you that I come. Have then rooms for me at the Great Eastern Hotel, so that I may be near to hand, and please it so arrange that we may see the young lady not too late on to-morrow, for it is likely that I may have to return here that night. But if need be I shall come again in three days, and stay longer if it must. Till then good-bye, my friend John.

" VAN HELSING."

Letter, Dr. Seward to Hon. Arthur Holmwood

" My dear Art,— " *September 3.*

" Van Helsing has come and gone. He came on with me to Hillingham, and found that, by Lucy's discretion, her mother was lunching out, so that we were alone with her. Van Helsing made a very careful examination of the patient. He is to report to me, and I shall advise you, for of course I was not present all the time. He is, I fear, much concerned, but says he must think. When I told him of our friendship and how you trust to me in the matter, he said : ' You must tell him all you think. Tell him what I think, if you can guess it, if you will. Nay, I am not jesting. This is no jest, but life and death, perhaps more.' I asked what he meant by that, for he was very serious. This was when we had come back to town, and he was having a cup of tea before starting on his return to Amsterdam. He would not give me any further clue. You must not be angry with him, Art, because his very reticence means that all his brains are working for her good. He will speak plainly enough when the time comes, be sure. So I told him I would simply write an account of our visit, just as if I were doing a descriptive special article for *The Daily Telegraph*. He seemed not to notice, but remarked that the smuts in London were not quite so bad as they used to be when he was a student here. I am to get his report to-morrow if he can possibly make it. In any case I am to have a letter.

"Well, as to the visit. Lucy was more cheerful than on the day I first saw her, and certainly looked better. She had lost something of the ghastly look that so upset you, and her breathing was normal. She was very sweet to the Professor (as she always is), and tried to make him feel at ease; though I could see that the poor girl was making a hard struggle for it. I believe Van Helsing saw it, too, for I saw the quick look under his bushy brows that I knew of old. Then he began to chat of all things, except ourselves and diseases, and with such an infinite geniality that I could see poor Lucy's pretence of animation merge into reality. Then, without any seeming change, he brought the conversation gently round to his visit, and suavely said:

"'My dear young miss, I have the so great pleasure because you are much beloved. That is much, my dear, even were there that which I do not see. They told me you were down in the spirit, and that you were of a ghastly pale. To them I say: "Pouf!"' And he snapped his fingers at me and went on: 'But you and I shall show them how wrong they are. How can he'—and he pointed at me with the same look and gesture as that with which once he pointed me out to his class on, or rather after, a particular occasion which he never fails to remind me of—'know anything of a young ladies? He has his madmans to play with, and to bring them back to happiness and to those that love them. It is much to do, and, oh, but there are rewards, in that we can bestow such happiness. But the young ladies! He has no wife nor daughter, and the young do not tell themselves to the young, but to the old, like me, who have known so many sorrows and the causes of them. So, my dear, we will send him away to smoke the cigarette in the garden, whiles you and I have little talk all to ourselves.' I took the hint, and strolled about, and presently the Professor came to the window and called me in. He looked grave, but said: 'I have made careful examination, but there is no functional cause. With you I agree that there has been much blood lost; it has been, but is not. But the conditions of her are in no way anæmic. I have asked her to send me her maid, that I may ask just one or two question, that so I may not chance to miss nothing. I know well what she will say. And yet there is cause; there is always cause for everything. I must go back home and think. You must send to me the telegram every day; and if there be cause I shall come again. The disease—for not to be all well is a disease—interest me, and the sweet young dear, she interest me too. She charm me, and for her, if not for you or disease, I come.'

"As I tell you, he would not say a word more, even when we were alone. And so now, Art, you know all I know. I shall keep stern watch. I trust your poor father is rallying. It must be a terrible thing to you, my dear old fellow, to be placed in such a position between two people who are both so dear to you. I know your idea of duty to your father, and you are right to stick to it; but, if need be, I shall send you word to come at once to Lucy; so do not be over-anxious unless you hear from me."

Dr. Seward's Diary

September 4.—Zoophagous patient still keeps up our interest in him. He had only one outburst, and that was yesterday at an unusual time. Just before the stroke of noon he began to grow restless. The attendant knew the symptoms, and at once summoned aid. Fortunately the men came at a run, and were just in time, for at the stroke of noon he became so violent that it took all their strength to hold him. In about five minutes, however, he began to get more and more quiet, and finally sank into a sort of melancholy, in which state he has remained up to now. The attendant tells me that his screams whilst in the paroxysm were really appalling; I found my hands full when I got in, attending to some of the other patients who were frightened by him. Indeed, I can quite understand the effect, for the sounds disturbed even me, though I was some distance away. It is now after the dinner-hour of the asylum, and as yet my patient sits in a corner brooding, with a dull, sullen, woebegone look in his face, which seems rather to indicate than to show something directly. I cannot quite understand it.

Later.—Another change in my patient. At five o'clock I looked in on him, and found him seemingly as happy and contented as he used to be. He was catching flies and eating them, and was keeping note of his capture by making nail-marks on the edge of the door between the ridges of padding. When he saw me, he came over and apologized for his bad conduct, and asked me in a very humble, cringing way to be led back to his own room and to have his note-book again. I thought it well to humour him; so he is back in his room, with the window open. He has the sugar of his tea spread out on the window-sill, and is reaping quite a harvest of flies. He is not now eating them, but putting them into a box, as of old, and is already examining the corners of his room to find a spider. I tried to get him to talk about the past few days, for any clue to his thoughts would be of immense help to me; but he would not rise. For a moment or two he looked very sad, and said in a sort of far-away voice, as though saying it rather to himself than to me:

"All over! all over! He has deserted me. No hope for me now unless I do it for myself!" Then, suddenly turning to me in a resolute way, he said: "Doctor, won't you be very good to me and let me have a little more sugar? I think it would be good for me."

"And the flies?" I said.

"Yes! The flies like it, too, and I like the

flies; therefore I like it." And there are people who know so little as to think that madmen do not argue. I procured him a double supply, and left him as happy a man as, I suppose, any in the world. I wish I could fathom his mind.

Midnight.—Another change in him. I had been to see Miss Westenra, whom I found much better, and had just returned, and was standing at our own gate looking at the sunset, when once more I heard him yelling. As his room is on this side of the house, I could hear it better than in the morning. It was a shock to me to turn from the wonderful smoky beauty of a sunset over London, with its lurid lights and inky shadows and all the marvellous tints that come on foul clouds even as on foul water, and to realize all the grim sternness of my own cold stone building, with its wealth of breathing misery, and my own desolate heart to endure it all. I reached him just as the sun was going down, and from his window saw the red disc sink. As it sank he became less and less frenzied; and just as it dipped he slid from the hands that held him, an inert mass, on the floor. It is wonderful, however, what intellectual recuperative power lunatics have, for within a few minutes he stood up quite calmly and looked around him. I signalled to the attendants not to hold him, for I was anxious to see what he would do. He went straight over to the window and brushed out the crumbs of sugar; then he took his fly-box and emptied it outside, and threw away the box. then he shut the window, and crossing over, sat down on his bed. All this surprised me, so I asked him: "Are you not going to keep flies any more?"

"No," said he; "I am sick of all that rubbish!" He certainly is a wonderfully interesting study. I wish I could get some glimpse of his mind or of the cause of his sudden passion. Stop; there may be a clue after all, if we can find why to-day his paroxysms came on at high noon and at sunset. Can it be that there is a malign influence of the sun at periods which affects certain natures—as at times the moon does others? We shall see.

Telegram, Seward, London, to Van Helsing, Amsterdam

"*September* 4.—Patient still better to-day."

Telegram, Seward, London, to Van Helsing, Amsterdam

"*September* 5.—Patient greatly improved. Good appetite; sleeps naturally; good spirits; colour coming back."

Telegram, Seward, London, to Van Helsing, Amsterdam

'*September* 6.—Terrible change for the worse Come at once; do not lose an hour. I hold over telegram to Holmwood till have seen you."

CHAPTER X

Letter, Dr. Seward to Hon. Arthur Holmwood

"*September* 6.

"MY DEAR ART,—

"My news to-day is not so good. Lucy this morning had gone back a bit. There is, however, one good thing which has arisen from it: Mrs. Westenra was naturally anxious concerning Lucy, and has consulted me professionally about her. I took advantage of the opportunity, and told her that my old master, Van Helsing, the great specialist, was coming to stay with me, and that I would put her in his charge conjointly with myself; so now we can come and go without alarming her unduly, for a shock to her would mean sudden death, and this, in Lucy's weak condition, might be disastrous to her. We are hedged in with difficulties, all of us, my poor old fellow; but, please God, we shall come through them all right. If any need I shall write, so that, if you do not hear from me, take it for granted that I am simply waiting for news. In haste, "Yours ever,

"JOHN SEWARD."

DR. SEWARD'S DIARY

September 7.—The first thing Van Helsing said to me when we met at Liverpool Street was:

"Have you said anything to our young friend the lover of her?"

"No," I said. "I waited till I had seen you, as I said in my telegram. I wrote him a letter simply telling him that you were coming, as Miss Westenra was not so well, and that I should let him know if need be."

"Right, my friend," he said, "quite right! Better he not know as yet; perhaps he shall never know. I pray so; but if it be needed, then he shall know all. And, my good friend John, let me caution you. You deal with the madmen. All men are mad in some way or the other; and inasmuch as you deal discreetly with your madmen, so deal with God's madmen, too—the rest of the world. You tell not your madmen what you do nor why you do it; you tell them not what you think. So you shall keep knowledge in its place, where it may rest—where it may gather its kind around it and breed. You and I shall keep as yet what we know here, and here." He touched me on the heart and on the forehead, and then touched himself the same way. "I have for myself thoughts at the present. Later I shall unfold to you."

"Why not now?" I asked. "It may do some good; we may arrive at some decision." He stopped and looked at me, and said:

"My friend John, when the corn is grown, even before it has ripened—while the milk of its mother-earth is in him, and the sunshine has not yet begun to paint him with his gold, the husbandman he pull the ear and rub him between his rough hands, and blow away the green chaff, and say to you: 'Look! he's good corn; he will make good crop when the time comes.'"

I did not see the application, and told him so. For reply he reached over and took my ear in his hand and pulled it playfully, as he used long ago to do at lectures, and said: "The good husbandman tell you so then because he knows, but not till then. But you do not find the good husbandman dig up his planted corn to see if he grow; that is for the children who play at husbandry, and not for those who take it as of the work of their life. See you now, friend John? I have sown my corn, and Nature has her work to do in making it sprout; if he sprout at all, there's some promise; and I wait till the ear begins to swell." He broke off, for he evidently saw that I understood. Then he went on, and very gravely:

"You were always a careful student, and your case-book was ever more full than the rest. You were only student then; now you are master, and I trust that good habit have not fail. Remember, my friend, that knowledge is stronger than memory, and we should not trust the weaker. Even if you have not kept the good practice, let me tell you that this case of our dear miss is one that may be—mind, I say *may be*—of such interest to us and others that all the rest may not make him kick the beam, as your peoples say. Take then good note of it. Nothing is too small. I counsel you, put down in record even your doubts and surmises. Hereafter it may be of interest to you to see how true you guess. We learn from failure, not from success!"

When I described Lucy's symptoms—the same as before, but infinitely more marked—he looked very grave, but said nothing. He took with him a bag in which were many instruments and drugs, "the ghastly paraphernalia of our beneficial trade," as he once called, in one of his lectures, the equipment of a professor of the healing craft. When we were shown in, Mrs. Westenra met us. She was alarmed, but not nearly so much as I expected to find her. Nature in one of her beneficent moods has ordained that even death has some antidote to its own terrors. Here, in a case where any shock may prove fatal, matters are so ordered that, from some cause or other, the things not personal—even the terrible change in her daughter to whom she is so attached—do not seem to reach her. It is something like the way Dame Nature gathers round a foreign body an envelope of some insensitive tissue which can protect from evil that which it would otherwise harm by contact. If this be an ordered selfishness, then we should pause before we condemn anyone for the vice of egoism, for there may be deeper roots for its causes than we have knowledge of.

I used my knowledge of this phase of spiritual pathology, and laid down a rule that she should not be present with Lucy or think of her illness more than was absolutely required. She assented readily, so readily that I saw again the hand of Nature fighting for life. Van Helsing and I were shown up to Lucy's room. If I was shocked when I saw her yesterday, I was horrified when I saw her to-day. She was ghastly, chalkily pale; the red seemed to have gone even from her lips and gums, and the bones of her face stood out prominently; her breathing was painful to see or hear. Van Helsing's face grew set as marble, and his eyebrows converged till they almost touched over his nose. Lucy lay motionless and did not seem to have strength to speak, so for a while we were all silent. Then Van Helsing beckoned to me, and we went gently out of the room. The instant we had closed the door he stepped quickly along the passage to the next door, which was open. Then he pulled me quickly in with him and closed the door.

"My God!" he said; "this is dreadful. There is no time to be lost. She will die for sheer want of blood to keep the heart's action as it should be. There must be transfusion of blood at once. Is it you or me?"

"I am younger and stronger, Professor. It must be me."

"Then get ready at once. I will bring up my bag. I am prepared."

I went downstairs with him, and as we were going there was a knock at the hall-door. When we reached the hall the maid had just opened the door, and Arthur was stepping quickly in. He rushed up to me, saying in an eager whisper:

"Jack, I was so anxious. I read between the lines of your letter, and have been in an agony. The dad was better, so I ran down here to see for myself. Is not that gentleman Dr. Van Helsing? I am so thankful to you, sir, for coming." When first the Professor's eye had lit upon him he had been angry at any interruption at such a time; but now, as he took in his stalwart proportions and recognized the strong young manhood which seemed to emanate from him, his eyes gleamed. Without a pause he said to him gravely as he held out his hand:

"Sir, you have come in time. You are the lover of our dear miss. She is bad, very, very bad. Nay, my child, do not go like that." For he suddenly grew pale and sat down in a chair almost fainting. "You are to help her. You can do more than any that live, and your courage is your best help."

"What can I do?" asked Arthur hoarsely. "Tell me, and I shall do it. My life is hers, and I would give the last drop of blood in my body for her." The Professor has a strongly humorous side, and I could from old knowledge detect a trace of its origin in his answer:

"My young sir, I do not ask so much as that—not the last!"

"What shall I do?" There was fire in his eyes, and his open nostril quivered with intent. Van Helsing slapped him on the shoulder. "Come!" he said. "You are a man, and it is a man we want. You are better than me, better than my friend John." Arthur looked be-

wildered, and the Professor went on by explaining in a kindly way:

"Young miss is bad, very bad. She wants blood, and blood she must have or die. My friend John and I have consulted; and we are about to perform what we call transfusion of blood—to transfer from full veins of one to the empty veins which pine for him. John was to give his blood, as he is the more young and strong than me"—here Arthur took my hand and wrung it hard in silence—"but, now you are here, you are more good than us, old or young, who toil much in the world of thought. Our nerves are not so calm and our blood not so bright than yours!" Arthur turned to him and said:

"If you only knew how gladly I would die for her you would understand——"

He stopped, with a sort of choke in his voice.

"Good boy!" said Van Helsing. "In the not-so-far-off you will be happy that you have done all for her you love. Come now and be silent. You shall kiss her once before it is done, but then you must go; and you must leave at my sign. Say no word to Madame; you know how it is with her! There must be no shock; any knowledge of this would be one. Come!"

We all went up to Lucy's room. Arthur by direction remained outside. Lucy turned her head and looked at us, but said nothing. She was not asleep, but she was simply too weak to make the effort. Her eyes spoke to us; that was all. Van Helsing took some things from his bag and laid them on a little table out of sight. Then he mixed a narcotic, and coming over to the bed, said cheerily:

"Now, little miss, here is your medicine. Drink it off, like a good child. See, I lift you so that to swallow is easy. Yes." She had made the effort with success.

It astonished me how long the drug took to act. This, in fact, marked the extent of her weakness. The time seemed endless until sleep began to flicker in her eyelids. At last, however, the narcotic began to manifest its potency; and she fell into a deep sleep. When the Professor was satisfied he called Arthur into the room, and bade him strip off his coat. Then he added: "You may take that one little kiss whiles I bring over the table. Friend John, help to me!" So neither of us looked whilst he bent over her.

Van Helsing turning to me, said:

"He is so young and strong and of blood so pure that we need not defibrinate it."

Then with swiftness, but with absolute method, Van Helsing performed the operation. As the transfusion went on something like life seemed to come back to poor Lucy's cheeks, and through Arthur's growing pallor the joy of his face seemed absolutely to shine. After a bit I began to grow anxious, for the loss of blood was telling on Arthur, strong man as he was. It gave me an idea of what a terrible strain Lucy's system must have undergone that what weakened Arthur only partially restored her. But the Professor's face was set, and he stood watch in hand and with his eyes fixed now on the patient and now on Arthur. I could hear my own heart beat. Presently he said in a soft voice: "Do not stir an instant. It is enough. You attend him; I will look to her." When all was over I could see how much Arthur was weakened. I dressed the wound and took his arm to bring him away, when Van Helsing spoke without turning round—the man seems to have eyes in the back of his head:

"The brave lover I think deserve another kiss, which he shall have presently." And as he had now finished his operation, he adjusted the pillow to the patient's head. As he did so the narrow black velvet band which she seems always to wear round her throat, buckled with an old diamond buckle which her lover had given her, was dragged a little up, and showed a red mark on her throat. Arthur did not notice it, but I could hear the deep hiss of indrawn breath which is one of Van Helsing's ways of betraying emotion. He said nothing at the moment, but turned to me, saying: "Now take down our brave young lover, give him of the port wine, and let him lie down a while. He must then go home and rest, sleep much and eat much, that he may be recruited of what he has so given to his love. He must not stay here. Hold! a moment. I may take it, sir, that you are anxious of result. Then bring it with you that in all ways the operation is successful. You have saved her life this time, and you can go home and rest easy in mind that all that can be is. I shall tell her all when she is well; she shall love you none the less for what you have done. Good-bye."

¶

WHEN Arthur had gone I went back to the room. Lucy was sleeping gently, but her breathing was stronger; I could see the counterpane move as her breast heaved. By the bedside sat Van Helsing, looking at her intently. The velvet band again covered the red mark. I asked the Professor in a whisper:

"What do you make of that mark on her throat?"

"What do you make of it?"

"I have not seen it yet," I answered, and then and there proceeded to loose the band. Just over the external jugular vein there were two punctures, not large, but not wholesome-looking. There was no sign of disease, but the edges were white and worn-looking, as if by some trituration. It at once occurred to me that this wound, or whatever it was, might be the means of that manifest loss of blood; but I abandoned the idea as soon as formed, for such a thing could not be. The whole bed would have been drenched to a scarlet with the blood which the

girl must have lost to leave such a pallor as she had before the transfusion.

"Well?" said Van Helsing.

"Well," said I, "I can make nothing of it."

The Professor stood up. "I must go back to Amsterdam to-night," he said. "There are books and things there which I want. You must remain here all the night, and you must not let your sight pass from her."

"Shall I have a nurse?" I asked.

"We are the best nurses, you and I. You keep watch all night; see that she is well fed, and that nothing disturbs her. You must not sleep all the night. Later on we can sleep, you and I. I shall be back so soon as possible. And then we may begin."

"May begin?" I said. "What on earth do you mean?"

"We shall see!" he answered as he hurried out. He came back a moment later and put his head inside the door, and said, with warning finger held up:

"Remember, she is your charge. If you leave her, and harm befall, you shall not sleep easy hereafter!"

September 8.—I sat up all night with Lucy. The opiate worked itself off towards dusk, and she waked naturally; she looked a different being from what she had been before the operation. Her spirits even were good, and she was full of a happy vivacity, but I could see evidences of the absolute prostration which she had undergone. When I told Mrs. Westenra that Dr. Van Helsing had directed that I should sit up with her she almost pooh-poohed the idea, pointing out her daughter's renewed strength and excellent spirits. I was firm, however, and made preparations for my long vigil. When her maid had prepared her for the night I came in, having in the meantime had supper, and took a seat by the bedside. She did not in any way make objection, but looked at me gratefully whenever I caught her eye. After a long spell she seemed sinking off to sleep, but with an effort seemed to pull herself together and shook it off. This was repeated several times, with greater effort and with shorter pauses as the time moved on. It was apparent that she did not want to sleep, so I tackled the subject at once:

"You do not want to go to sleep?"

"No; I am afraid."

"Afraid to go to sleep! Why so? It is the boon we all crave for."

"Ah, not if you were like me—if sleep was to you a presage of horror!"

"A presage of horror! What on earth do you mean?"

"I don't know; oh, I don't know. And that is what is so terrible. All this weakness comes to me in sleep; until I dread the very thought."

"But, my dear girl, you may sleep to-night. I am here watching you, and I can promise that nothing will happen."

"Ah, I can trust you!" I seized the opportunity, and said: "I promise you that if I see any evidence of bad dreams I will wake you at once."

"You will? Oh, will you really? How good you are to me! Then I will sleep!" And almost at the word she gave a deep sigh of relief, and sank back, asleep.

All night long I watched by her. She never stirred, but slept on and on in a deep, tranquil, life-giving, health-giving sleep. Her lips were slightly parted, and her breast rose and fell with the regularity of a pendulum. There was a smile on her face, and it was evident that no bad dreams had come to disturb her peace of mind.

In the early morning her maid came, and I left her in her care and went home, for I was anxious about many things. I sent a short wire to Van Helsing and to Arthur, telling them of the excellent result of the operation. My own work, with its manifold arrears, took me all day to clear off; it was dark when I was able to inquire about my zoophagous patient. The report was good: he had been quite quiet for the past day and night. A telegram came from Van Helsing at Amsterdam whilst I was at dinner, suggesting that I should be at Hillingham to-night, as it might be well to be at hand, and stating that he was leaving by the night mail and would join me early in the morning.

September 9.—I was pretty tired and worn-out when I got to Hillingham. For two nights I had hardly had a wink of sleep, and my brain was beginning to feel that numbness which marks cerebral exhaustion. Lucy was up and in cheerful spirits. When she shook hands with me she looked sharply in my face and said:

"No sitting up to-night for you. You are worn-out. I am quite well again; indeed, I am; and if there is to be any sitting up, it is I who will sit up with you." I would not argue the point, but went and had my supper. Lucy came with me, and, enlivened by her charming presence, I made an excellent meal, and had a couple of glasses of the more than excellent port. Then Lucy took me upstairs, and showed me a room next her own, where a cosy fire was burning. "Now," she said, "you must stay here. I shall leave this door open and my door too. You can lie on the sofa, for I know that nothing would induce any of you doctors to go to bed whilst there is a patient above the horizon. If I want anything I shall call out, and you can come to me at once." I could not but acquiesce, for I was "dog-tired," and could not have sat up had I tried. So, on her renewing her promise to call me if she should want anything, I lay on the sofa, and forgot all about everything.

Lucy Westenra's Diary

September 9.—I feel so happy to-night. I have been so miserably weak, that to be able to think and move about is like feeling sunshine after a long spell of east wind out of a steel sky. Somehow Arthur feels very, very close to me.

I seem to feel his presence warm about me. I suppose it is that sickness and weakness are selfish things and turn our inner eyes and sympathy on ourselves, whilst health and strength give Love rein, and in thought and feeling he can wander where he wills. I know where my thoughts are. If Arthur only knew! My dear, my dear, your ears must tingle as you sleep, as mine do waking. Oh, the blissful rest of last night! How I slept, with that dear, good Dr. Seward watching me. And to-night I shall not fear to sleep, since he is close at hand and within call. Thank everybody for being so good to me! Thank God! Good night, Arthur.

DR. SEWARD'S DIARY

September 10.—I was conscious of the Professor's hand on my head, and started awake all in a second. That is one of the things that we learn in an asylum, at any rate.

"And how is our patient?"

"Well, when I left her, or rather when she left me," I answered.

"Come, let us see," he said. And together we went into the room.

The blind was down, and I went over to raise it gently, whilst Van Helsing stepped, with his soft, cat-like tread, over to the bed.

As I raised the blind, and the morning sunlight flooded the room, I heard the Professor's low hiss of inspiration, and knowing its rarity, a deadly fear shot through my heart. As I passed over he moved back, and his exclamation of horror, "Gott in Himmel!" needed no enforcement from his agonized face. He raised his hand and pointed to the bed, and his iron face was drawn and ashen white. I felt my knees begin to tremble.

There on the bed, seemingly in a swoon, lay poor Lucy, more horribly white and wan-looking than ever. Even the lips were white, and the gums seemed to have shrunken back from the teeth, as we sometimes see in a corpse after a prolonged illness. Van Helsing raised his foot to stamp in anger, but the instinct of his life and all the long years of habit stood to him, and he put it down again softly. "Quick!" he said. "Bring the brandy." I flew to the dining-room, and returned with the decanter. He wetted the poor white lips with it, and together we rubbed palm and wrist and heart. He felt her heart, and after a few moments of agonizing suspense said:

"It is not too late. It beats, though but feebly. All our work is undone; we must begin again. There is no young Arthur here now; I have to call on you yourself this time, friend John." As he spoke, he was dipping into his bag and producing the instruments for transfusion; I had taken off my coat and rolled up my shirt-sleeve. There was no possibility of an opiate just at present, and no need of one; and so, without a moment's delay, we began the operation. After a time—it did not seem a short time either, for the draining away of one's blood, no matter how willingly it be given, is a terrible feeling—Van Helsing held up a warning finger. "Do not stir," he said, "but I fear that with growing strength she may wake; and that would make danger, oh, so much danger. But I shall precaution take. I shall give hypodermic injection of morphia." He proceeded then, swiftly and deftly, to carry out his intent. The effect on Lucy was not bad, for the faint seemed to merge subtly into the narcotic sleep. It was with a feeling of personal pride that I could see a faint tinge of colour steal back into the pallid cheeks and lips. No man knows till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves.

The Professor watched me critically. "That will do," he said. "Already?" I remonstrated. "You took a great deal more from Art." To which he smiled a sad sort of a smile as he replied:

"He is her lover, her *fiancé*. You have work, much work, to do for her and for others; and the present will suffice."

When we stopped the operation, he attended to Lucy, whilst I applied digital pressure to my own incision. I lay down, whilst I waited his leisure to attend to me, for I felt faint and a little sick. By and by he bound up my wound, and sent me downstairs to get a glass of wine for myself. As I was leaving the room, he came after me, and half whispered:

"Mind, nothing must be said of this. If our young lover should turn up unexpected, as before, no word to him. It would at once frighten him and enjealous him, too. There must be none. So!"

When I came back he looked at me carefully, and then said:

"You are not much the worse. Go into the room, and lie on your sofa, and rest awhile; then have much breakfast, and come here to me."

I followed out his orders, for I knew now right and wise they were. I had done my part, and now my next duty was to keep up my strength. I felt very weak, and in the weakness lost something of the amazement at what had occurred. I fell asleep on the sofa, however, wondering over and over again how Lucy had made such a retrograde movement, and how she could have been drained of so much blood with no sign anywhere to show for it. I think I must have continued my wonder in my dreams, for, sleeping and waking, my thoughts always came back to the little punctures in her throat and the ragged, exhausted appearance of their edges—tiny though they were.

Lucy slept well into the day; and when she woke she was fairly well and strong, though not nearly so much so as the day before. When Van Helsing had seen her, he went out for a walk, leaving me in charge, with strict injunctions that I was not to leave her for a moment.

I could hear his voice in the hall, asking the way to the nearest telegraph office.

Lucy chatted with me freely, and seemed quite unconscious that anything had happened. I tried to keep her amused and interested. When her mother came up to see her, she did not seem to notice any change whatever, but said to me gratefully:

"We owe you so much, Dr. Seward, for all you have done, but you really must now take care not to overwork yourself. You are looking pale yourself. You want a wife to nurse and look after you a bit; that you do!" As she spoke Lucy turned crimson, though it was only momentarily, for her poor wasted veins could not stand for long such an unwonted drain to the head. The reaction came in excessive pallor as she turned imploring eyes on me. I smiled and nodded, and laid my finger on my lips; with a sigh, she sank back amid her pillows.

Van Helsing returned in a couple of hours, and presently said to me: "Now you go home, and eat much and drink enough. Make yourself strong. I stay here to-night, and I shall sit up with little miss myself. You and I must watch the case, and we must have none other to know. I have grave reasons. No, do not ask them; think what you will. Do not fear to think even the most not-probable. Good night."

In the hall two of the maids came to me, and asked if they or either of them might not sit up with Miss Lucy. They implored me to let them; and when I said it was Dr. Van Helsing's wish that either he or I should sit up, they asked me quite piteously to intercede with the "foreign gentleman." I was much touched by their kindness. Perhaps it is because I am weak at present, and perhaps it was on Lucy's account that their devotion was manifested; for over and over again have I seen similar instances of woman's kindness. I got back here in time for a late dinner; went my rounds—all well; and set this down whilst waiting for sleep. It is coming.

September 11.—This afternoon I went over to Hillingham. Found Van Helsing in excellent spirits, and Lucy much better. Shortly after I had arrived, a big parcel from abroad came for the Professor. He opened it with much impressment—assumed, of course—and showed a great bundle of white flowers.

"These are for you, Miss Lucy," he said.

"For me? Oh, Dr. Van Helsing!"

"Yes, my dear, but not for you to play with. These are medicines." Here Lucy made a wry face. "Nay, but they are not to take in a decoction or in nauseous form, so you need not snub that so charming nose, or I shall point out to my friend Arthur what woes he may have to endure in seeing so much beauty that he so loves so much distort. Aha, my pretty miss, that bring the so nice nose all straight again. This is medicinal, but you do not know how. I put him in your window, I make pretty wreath, and hang him round your neck, so that you sleep well. Oh yes! they, like the lotus flower, make your trouble forgotten. It smell so like the waters of Lethe, and of that fountain of youth that the Conquistadores sought for in the Floridas, and find him all too late."

Whilst he was speaking, Lucy had been examining the flowers and smelling them. Now she threw them down, saying, with half-laughter and half-disgust:

"Oh, Professor, I believe you are only putting up a joke on me. Why, these flowers are only common garlic."

To my surprise, Van Helsing rose up and said with all his sternness, his iron jaw set and his bushy eyebrows meeting:

"No trifling with me! I never jest! There is grim purpose in all I do; and I warn you that you do not thwart me. Take care, for the sake of others if not for your own." Then seeing poor Lucy scared, as she might well be, he went on more gently: "Oh, little miss, my dear, do not fear me. I only do for your good; but there is much virtue to you in those so common flower. See, I place them myself in your room. I make myself the wreath that you are to wear. But hush! no telling to others that make so inquisitive questions. We must obey, 'and silence is a part of obedience; and obedience is to bring you strong and well into loving arms that wait for you. Now sit still awhile. Come with me, friend John, and you shall help me deck the room with my garlic, which is all the way from Haarlem, where my friend Vanderpool raise herb in his glass-houses all the year. I had to telegraph yesterday, or they would not have been here."

We went into the room, taking the flowers with us. The Professor's actions were certainly odd, and not to be found in any pharmacopœia that I ever heard of. First he fastened up the windows and latched them securely; next, taking a handful of the flowers, he rubbed them all over the sashes, as though to ensure that every whiff of air that might get in would be laden with the garlic smell. Then with the wisp he rubbed all over the jamb of the door, above, below, and at each side, and round the fireplace in the same way. It all seemed grotesque to me, and presently I said:

"Well, Professor, I know you always have a reason for what you do, but this certainly puzzles me. It is well we have no sceptic here, or he would say that you were working some spell to keep out an evil spirit."

"Perhaps I am!" he answered quietly as he began to make the wreath which Lucy was to wear round her neck.

We then waited whilst Lucy made her toilet for the night, and when she was in bed he came and himself fixed the wreath of garlic round her neck. The last words he said to her were:

"Take care you do not disturb it; and even if the room feel close, do not to-night open the window or the door."

" I promise," said Lucy, " and thank you both a thousand times for all your kindness to me ! Oh, what have I done to be blessed with such friends ? "

As we left the house in my fly, which was waiting, Van Helsing said :

" To-night I can sleep in peace, and sleep I want—two nights of travel, much reading in the day between, and much anxiety on the day to follow, and a night to sit up, without to wink. To-morrow in the morning early you call for me, and we come together to see our pretty miss, so much more strong for my ' spell ' which I have work. Ho ! ho ! "

He seemed so confident that I, remembering my own confidence two nights before and with the baneful result, felt awe and vague terror. It must have been my weakness that made me hesitate to tell it to my friend, but I felt it all the more, like unshed tears.

CHAPTER XI

Lucy Westenra's Diary

SEPTEMBER 12.—How good they all are to me ! I quite love that dear Dr. Van Helsing. I wonder why he was so anxious about these flowers. He positively frightened me, he was so fierce. And yet he must have been right, for I feel comfort from them already. Somehow, I do not dread being alone to-night, and I can go to sleep without fear. I shall not mind any flapping outside the window. Oh, the terrible struggle that I have had against sleep so often of late ; the pain of the sleeplessness, or the pain of the fear of sleep, with such unknown horrors as it has for me ! How blessed are some people, whose lives have no fears, no dreads ; to whom sleep is a blessing that comes nightly, and brings nothing but sweet dreams. Well, here I am to-night, hoping for sleep, and lying like Ophelia in the play, with " virgin crants and maiden strewments." I never liked garlic before, but to-night it is delightful ! There is peace in its smell ; I feel sleep coming already. Good night, everybody.

Dr. Seward's Diary

September 13.—Called at the Berkeley and found Van Helsing, as usual, up to time. The carriage ordered from the hotel was waiting. The Professor took his bag, which he always brings with him now.

Let all be put down exactly. Van Helsing and I arrived at Hillingham at eight o'clock. It was a lovely morning ; the bright sunshine and all the fresh feeling of early autumn seemed like the completion of Nature's annual work. The leaves were turning to all kinds of beautiful colours, but had not yet begun to drop from the trees. When we entered we met Mrs. Westenra coming out of the morning room. She is always an early riser. She greeted us warmly and said :

" You will be glad to know that Lucy is better. The dear child is still asleep. I looked into her room and saw her, but did not go in, lest I should disturb her." The Professor smiled, and looked quite jubilant. He rubbed his hands together, and said :

" Aha ! I thought I had diagnosed the case. My treatment is working," to which she answered :

" You must not take all the credit to yourself, doctor. Lucy's state this morning is due in part to me."

" How do you mean, ma'am ? " asked the Professor.

" Well, I was anxious about the dear child in the night, and went into her room. She was sleeping soundly—so soundly that even my coming did not wake her. But the room was awfully stuffy. There were a lot of those horrible, strong-smelling flowers about everywhere, and she had actually a bunch of them round her neck. I feared that the heavy odour would be too much for the dear child in her weak state, so I took them all away and opened a bit of the window to let in a little fresh air. You will be pleased with her, I am sure."

She moved off into her boudoir, where she usually breakfasted early. As she had spoken, I watched the Professor's face, and saw it turn ashen grey. He had been able to retain his self-command whilst the poor lady was present, for he knew her state and how mischievous a shock would be ; he actually smiled on her as he held open the door for her to pass into her room. But the instant she had disappeared he pulled me, suddenly and forcibly, into the dining-room and closed the door.

Then, for the first time in my life, I saw Van Helsing break down. He raised his hands over his head in a sort of mute despair, and then beat his palms together in a helpless way ; finally he sat down on a chair, and putting his hands before his face, began to sob, with loud, dry sobs that seemed to come from the very racking of his heart. Then he raised his arms again, as though appealing to the whole universe. " God ! God ! God ! " he said. " What have we done, what has this poor thing done, that we are so sore beset ? Is there fate amongst us still, sent down from the pagan world of old, that such things must be, and in such way ? This poor mother, all unknowing, and all for the best as she think, does such thing as lose her daughter body and soul ; and we must not tell her, we must not even warn her, or she die, and then both die. Oh, how we are beset ! How are all the powers of the devils against us ! " Suddenly he jumped to his feet. " Come," he said, " come, we must see and act. Devils or no devils, or all the devils at once, it matters not ; we fight him all the same." He went to the hall-door for his bag ; and together we went up to Lucy's room.

Once again I drew up the blind, whilst Van Helsing went towards the bed. This time he

did not start as he looked on the poor face with the same awful, waxen pallor as before. He wore a look of stern sadness and infinite pity.

"As I expected," he murmured, with that hissing inspiration of his which meant so much. Without a word he went and locked the door, and then began to set out on the little table the instruments for yet another operation of transfusion of blood. I had long ago recognized the necessity, and began to take off my coat, but he stopped me with a warning hand. "No!" he said. "To-day you must operate. I shall provide. You are weakened already." As he spoke he took off his coat and rolled up his shirt-sleeve.

Again the operation; again the narcotic; again some return of colour to the ashy cheeks, and the regular breathing of healthy sleep. This time I watched whilst Van Helsing recruited himself and rested.

Presently he took an opportunity of telling Mrs. Westenra that she must not remove anything from Lucy's room without consulting him; that the flowers were of medicinal value, and that the breathing of their odour was a part of the system of cure. Then he took over the care of the case himself, saying that he would watch this night and the next and would send me word when to come.

After another hour Lucy waked from her sleep, fresh and bright, and seemingly not much the worse for her terrible ordeal.

What does it all mean? I am beginning to wonder if my long habit of life amongst the insane is perhaps beginning to tell upon my own brain.

Lucy Westenra's Diary

SEPTEMBER 17.—Four days and nights of peace. I am getting so strong again that I hardly know myself. It is as if I had passed through some long nightmare, and had just awakened to see the beautiful sunshine and feel the fresh air of the morning around me. I have a dim half-remembrance of long, anxious times of waiting and fearing; darkness in which there was not even the pain of hope to make present distress more poignant; and then long spells of oblivion, and the rising back to life as a diver coming up through a great press of water. Since, however, Dr. Van Helsing has been with me, all this bad dreaming seems to have passed away; the noises that used to frighten me out of my wits—the flapping against the windows, the distant voices which seemed so close to me, the harsh sounds that came from I know not where and commanded me to do I know not what—have all ceased. I go to bed now without any fear of sleep. I do not even try to keep awake. I have grown quite fond of the garlic, and a boxful arrives for me every day from Haarlem. To-night Dr. Van Helsing is going away, as he has to be for a day in Amsterdam. But I need not be watched; I am well enough to be left alone. Thank God for mother's sake, and dear Arthur's, and for all our friends who have been so kind! I shall not even feel the change, for last night Dr. Van Helsing slept in his chair a lot of the time. I found him asleep twice when I awoke; but I did not fear to go to sleep again, although the boughs or bats or something flapped almost angrily against the window-panes.

¶

"The Pall Mall Gazette," September 18

THE ESCAPED WOLF

PERILOUS ADVENTURE OF OUR INTERVIEWER

Interview with the Keeper in the Zoological Gardens

After many inquiries and almost as many refusals, and perpetually using the words *Pall Mall Gazette* as a sort of talisman, I managed to find the keeper of the section of the Zoological Gardens in which the wolf department is included. Thomas Bilder lives in one of the cottages in the enclosure behind the elephant-house, and was just sitting down to his tea when I found him. Thomas and his wife are hospitable folk, elderly, and without children, and if the specimen I enjoyed of their hospitality be of the average kind, their lives must be pretty comfortable.

The keeper would not enter on what he called "business" until the supper was over, and we were all satisfied. Then when the table was cleared, and he had lit his pipe, he said:

"Now, sir, you can go on and arsk me what you want. You'll excoose me refoosin' to talk of perfeshunal subjects afore meals. I gives the wolves and the jackals and the hyenas in all our section their tea afore I arsks them questions."

"How do you mean, ask them questions?" I queried.

"'Ittin' of them over the 'ead with a pole is one way; scratchin' of their hears is another, when gents as is flush wants a bit of a show-orf to their gals. I don't so much mind the fust—the 'ittin' with a pole afore I chucks in their dinner; but I waits till they've 'ad their sherry and kawffee, so to speak, afore I tries on with the ear-scratchin'. Mind you," he added philosophically, "there's a deal of the same nature in us as in them there animiles. Here's you a-comin' and arskin' of me questions about my business, and I that grumpy-like that only for your bloomin' arf-quid I'd 'a' seen you blowed fust, 'fore I'd answer. Not even when you arsked me sarcastic-like if I'd like you to arsk the Superintendent if you might arsk me questions. Without offence, did I tell yer to go to 'ell?"

"You did."

"An' when you said you'd report me for usin' of obscene language that was 'ittin' me over the

(*Continued on page* 150)

The man who had never

taken BEECHAM'S PILLS

'ead ; but the 'arf-quid made that all right. I weren't a-goin' to fight, so I waited for the food, and did with my 'owl as the wolves, and lions, and tigers does. But, Lor' love yer 'art, now that the old 'ooman has stuck a chunk of her tea-cake in me, an' rinsed me out with her bloomin' old teapot, and I've lit hup, you may scratch my ears for all you're worth, and won't get even a growl out of me. Drive along with your questions. I know what yer a-comin' at, that 'ere escaped wolf."

" Exactly. I want you to give me your view of it. Just tell me how it happened ; and when I know the facts I'll get you to say what you consider was the cause of it, and how you think the whole affair will end."

" All right, guv'nor. This 'ere is about the 'ole story. That 'ere wolf what we called Bersicker was one of three grey ones that came from Norway to Jamrach's, which we bought off him four year ago. He was a nice well-behaved wolf, that never gave no trouble to talk of. I'm more surprised at 'im for wantin' to get out nor any other animile in the place. But, there, you can't trust wolves no more nor women."

" Don't you mind him, sir ! " broke in Mrs. Tom, with a cheery laugh. " 'E's got mindin' the animiles so long that blest if he ain't like a old wolf 'isself ! But there ain't no 'arm in 'im."

" Well, sir, it was about two hours after feedin' yesterday when I first hear any disturbance. I was makin' up a litter in the monkey-house for a young puma which is ill ; but when I heard the yelpin' and 'owlin' I kem away straight. There was Bersicker a-tearin' like a mad thing at the bars as if he wanted to get out. There wasn't much people about that day, and close at hand was only one man, a tall, thin chap, with a 'ook nose and a pointed beard, with a few white hairs runnin' through it. He had a 'ard, cold look and red eyes, and I took a sort of mislike to him, for it seemed as if it was 'im as they was hirritated at. He 'ad white kid gloves on 'is 'ands, and he pointed out the animiles to me and says : ' Keeper, these wolves seem upset at something.' - -

" ' Maybe it's you,' says I, for I did not like the airs as he give 'isself. He didn't get angry, as I 'oped he would, but he smiled a kind of insolent smile, with a mouth full of white, sharp teeth. ' Oh no, they wouldn't like me,' 'e says.

" ' Ow yes, they would,' says I, a-imitatin' of him. ' They always likes a bone or two to clean their teeth on about tea-time, which you 'as a bagful.'

" Well, it was a odd thing, but when the animiles see us a-talkin' they lay down, and when I went over to Bersicker he let me stroke his ears same as ever. That there man kem over, and blessed but if he didn't put in his hand and stroke the old wolf's ears too !

" ' Tyke care,' says I. ' Bersicker is quick.'

" ' Never mind,' he says. ' I'm used to 'em ! '

" ' Are you in the business yourself ? ' I says, tyking off my 'at, for a man what trades in wolves, anceterer, is a good friend to keepers.

" ' No,' says he, ' not exactly in the business, but I 'ave made pets of several.' And with that he lifts his 'at as perlite as a lord, and walks away. Old Bersicker kep' a-lookin' arter 'im till 'e was out of sight, and then went and lay down in a corner, and wouldn't come hout the 'ole hevening. Well, larst night, so soon as the moon was hup, the wolves here all began a-'owling. There warn't nothing for them to 'owl at. There warn't no one near, except some one that was evidently a-callin' a dog somewheres out back of the gardings in the Park road. Once or twice I went out to see that all was right, and it was, and then the 'owling stopped. Just before twelve o'clock I just took a look round afore turnin' in, and, bust me, but when I kem opposite to old Bersicker's cage I see the rails broken and twisted about and the cage empty. And that's all I know for certing."

" Did anyone else see anything ? "

" One of our gard'ners was a-comin' 'ome about that time from a 'armony, when he sees a big grey dog comin' out through the garding 'edges. At least, so he says ; but I don't give much for it myself, for if he did 'e never said a word about it to his missis when 'e got 'ome, and it was only after the escape of the wolf was made known, and we had been up all night a-huntin' of the Park for Bersicker, that he remembered seein' anything. My own belief was that the 'armony 'ad got into his 'ead."

" Now, Mr. Bilder, can you account in any way for the escape of the wolf ? "

" Well, sir," he said, with a suspicious sort of modesty, " I think I can ; but I don't know as 'ow you'd be satisfied with the theory."

" Certainly I shall. If a man like you, who knows the animals from experience, can't hazard a good guess at any rate, who is even to try ? "

" Well, then, sir, I accounts for it this way ; it seems to me that 'ere wolf escaped—simply because he wanted to get out."

From the hearty way that both Thomas and his wife laughed at the joke I could see that it had done service before, and that the whole explanation was simply an elaborate sell. I couldn't cope in badinage with the worthy Thomas, but I thought I knew a surer way to his heart, so I said :

" Now, Mr. Bilder, we'll consider that first half-sovereign worked off, and this brother of his is waiting to be claimed when you've told me what you think will happen."

" Right y'are, sir," he said briskly. " Ye'll excoose me, I know, for a-chaffin' of ye, but the old woman here winked at me, which was as much as telling me to go on."

" Well, I never ! " said the old lady.

" My opinion is this : that 'ere wolf is a-'idin' of, somewheres. The gard'ner wot didn't

(*Continued on page 152*)

Domestic Skin Accidents

Germolene quickly heals cuts, bruises, scalds and burns, and takes away all the pain in an instant.

Mrs. A. Hoadley, of Downside Cottage, Park Road, Woking, scalded her foot so severely that for eleven weeks she suffered agony. The remedies she at first tried brought about no improvement, but Germolene at once soothed the pain, and now the ankle is completely healed. The scald was a very serious one, and the wonderful results of using Germolene have surprised both her and her friends.

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remember said he was a-gallopin' northward faster than a horse could go; but I don't believe him, for, yer see, sir, wolves don't gallop no more than dogs does, they not bein' built that way. Wolves is fine things in a story-book, and I dessay when they gets in packs and does be chivyin' somethin' that's more afeared than they is, they can make a devil of a noise and chop it up, whatever it is. But, Lor' bless you, in real life a wolf is only a low creature, not half so clever or bold as a good dog; and not half a quarter so much fight in 'im. This one ain't been used to fightin' or even to providin' for hisself, and more like he's somewhere round the Park a-'idin' an' a-shiverin' of, and, if he thinks at all, wonderin' where he is to get his breakfast from; or maybe he's got down some area and is in a coal-cellar."

I was handing him the half-sovereign, when something came bobbing up against the window, and Mr. Bilder's face doubled its natural length with surprise.

"God bless me!" he said. "If there ain't old Bersicker come back by 'isself!"

He went to the door and opened it; a most unnecessary proceeding it seemed to me. I have always thought that a wild animal never looks so well as when some obstacle of pronounced durability is between us; a personal experience has intensified rather than diminished that idea.

After all, however, there is nothing like custom, for neither Bilder nor his wife thought any more of the wolf than I should of a dog. The animal itself was as peaceful and well-behaved as that father of all picture-wolves, Red Riding Hood's quondam friend, whilst seeking her confidence in masquerade.

The whole scene was an unutterable mixture of comedy and pathos. The wicked wolf that for half a day had paralysed London and set all the children in the town shivering in their shoes, was there in a sort of penitent mood, and was received and petted like a sort of vulpine prodigal son. Old Bilder examined him all over with most tender solicitude, and when he had finished with his penitent said:

"There, I knew the poor old chap would get into some kind of trouble; didn't I say it all along? Here's his head all cut and full of broken glass. 'E's been a-gettin' over some bloomin' wall or other. It's a shyme that people are allowed to top their walls with broken bottles. This 'ere's what comes of it. Come along, Bersicker."

He took the wolf and locked him up in a cage, with a piece of meat that satisfied, in quantity at any rate, the elementary conditions of the fatted calf, and went off to report.

I came off, too, to report the only exclusive information that is given to-day regarding the strange escapade at the Zoo.

DR. SEWARD'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER 17.—I was engaged after dinner in my study posting up my books, which, through press of other work and the many visits to Lucy, had fallen sadly into arrear. Suddenly the door was burst open, and in rushed my patient, with his face distorted with passion. I was thunderstruck, for such a thing as a patient getting of his own accord into the Superintendent's study is almost unknown. Without an instant's pause he made straight at me. He had a dinner-knife in his hand, and, as I saw he was dangerous, I tried to keep the table between us. He was too quick and too strong for me, however; for before I could get my balance he had struck at me and cut my left wrist rather severely. Before he could strike again, however, I got in my right, and he was sprawling on his back on the floor. My wrist bled freely, and quite a little pool trickled on to the carpet. I saw that my friend was not intent on further effort, and occupied myself binding up my wrist, keeping a wary eye on the prostrate figure all the time. When the attendants rushed in, and we turned our attention to him, his employment positively sickened me. He was lying on his belly on the floor licking up, like a dog, the blood which had fallen from my wounded wrist. He was easily secured, and, to my surprise, went with the attendants quite placidly, simply repeating over and over again: "The blood is the life! the blood is the life!"

I cannot afford to lose blood just at present: I have lost too much of late for my physical good, and then the prolonged strain of Lucy's illness and its horrible phases is telling on me. I am over-excited and weary, and I need rest, rest, rest. Happily Van Helsing has not summoned me, so I need not forgo my sleep.

Telegram, Van Helsing, Antwerp, to Seward, Carfax

(Sent to Carfax, Sussex, as no county given; delivered late by twenty-two hours.)

"*September* 17.—Do not fail to be at Hillingham to-night. If not watching all the time, frequently visit and see that flowers are as placed; very important; do not fail. Shall be with you as soon as possible after arrival."

DR. SEWARD'S DIARY

September 18.—Just off for train to London. The arrival of Van Helsing's telegram filled me with dismay. A whole night lost, and I know by bitter experience what may happen in a night. Of course it is possible that all may be well, but what *may* have happened? Surely there is some horrible doom hanging over us that every possible accident should thwart us in all we try to do.

(To be continued in next month's "Argosy.")

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The ARGOSY
The WORLD'S BEST STORIES

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Where was Wych Street?

A trifle of argument and its weighty consequences

By STACY AUMONIER

IN the public bar of the "Wagtail," in Wapping, four men and a woman were drinking beer and discussing diseases. It was not a pretty subject, and the company was certainly not a handsome one. It was a dark November evening, and the dingy lighting of the bar seemed but to emphasize the bleak exterior. Drifts of fog and damp from without mingled with the smoke of shag. The sanded floor was kicked into a muddy morass not unlike the surface of the pavement. An old lady down the street had died from pneumonia the previous evening, and the event supplied a fruitful topic of conversation. The things one could get! Everywhere were germs eager to destroy one. At any minute the symptoms might break out. And so—one forgathered in a cheerful spot amidst friends and drank forgetfulness.

Prominent in this little group was Baldwin Meadows, a sallow-faced villain with battered features and prominent cheek-bones, his face cut and scarred by a hundred fights. Ex-seaman, ex-boxer, ex-fish-porter—indeed, to everyone's knowledge, ex-everything. No one knew how he lived. By his side lurched an enormous coloured man who went by the name of Harry Jones. Grinning above a tankard sat a pimply-faced young man who was known as "the Agent." Silver rings adorned his fingers. He had no other name, and most emphatically no address, but he "arranged things" for people, and appeared to thrive upon it in a scrambling, fugitive manner. The other two people were Mr. and Mrs. Dawes. Mr. Dawes was an entirely negative person, but Mrs. Dawes shone by virtue of a high, whining insistent voice, keyed to within half a note of hysteria.

Then, at one point, the conversation took a peculiar turn. It came about through Mrs. Dawes mentioning that her aunt, who died from eating tinned lobster, used to work in a corset shop in Wych Street. When she said that, "the Agent," whose right eye appeared to survey the ceiling, whilst his left eye looked over the other side of his tankard, remarked:

"Where was Wych Street, ma?"

"Lord!" exclaimed Mrs. Dawes. "Don't you know, dearie? You must be a young 'un, you must. Why, when I was a gal everyone knew Wych Street. It was just down there where they built the Kingsway, like."

Baldwin Meadows cleared his throat and said:

"Wych Street used to be a turnin' runnin' from Long Acre into Wellington Street."

"Oh, no, old boy," chipped in Mr. Dawes, who always treated the ex-man with great deference. "If you'll excuse me, Wych Street was a narrow lane at the back of the old Globe Theatre, that used to pass by the church."

Where was Wych Street?

"I know what I'm talking about," growled Meadows.

Mrs. Dawes's nasal whine broke in:

"Hi, Mr. Booth, you used ter know yer wye abaht. Where was Wych street?"

Mr. Booth, the proprietor, was polishing a tap. He looked up. "Wych Street? Yus, of course I knoo Wych Street. Used to go there with some of the boys when I was Covent Garden way. It was at right angles to the Strand, just east of Wellington Street."

"No, it warn't. It were alongside the Strand, before yer come to Wellington Street."

The coloured man took no part in the discussion, one street and one city being alike to him, provided he could obtain the material comforts dear to his heart; but the others carried it on with a certain amount of acerbity.

Before any agreement had been arrived at three other men entered the bar. The quick eye of Meadows recognized them at once as three of what was known at that time as "The Gallows Ring." Every member of "The Gallows Ring" had "done time," but they still carried on a lucrative industry devoted to blackmail, intimidation, shop-lifting, and some of the clumsier recreations. Their leader, Ben Orming, had served seven years for bashing a Chinaman down at Rotherhithe.

"The Gallows Ring" was not popular in Wapping, for the reason that many of their depredations had been inflicted upon their own class. When Meadows and Harry Jones took it into their heads to do a little wild prancing they took the trouble to go up into the West End. They considered "The Gallows Ring" an ungentlemanly lot; nevertheless, they always treated them with a certain external deference—unpleasant crowd to quarrel with.

Ben Orming ordered beer for the three, and they leant against the bar and whispered in sullen accents. Something had evidently miscarried with the Ring. Mrs. Dawes continued to whine. Suddenly she said:

"Ben, you're a hot old devil, you are. We was just 'aving a discussion like—Where was Wych Street?"

Ben scowled at her, and she continued:

"Some sez it was one place, some sez it was another. I know where it was, 'cors my aunt what died from blood p'ison, after eatin' tinned lobster, used to work at a corset shop. . . ."

"Yus," barked Ben, emphatically. "I know where Wych Street was—it was just sarth of the river, afore yer come to Waterloo Station."

It was then that the coloured man, who up to that point had taken no part in the discussion, thought fit to intervene.

"Nope. You's all wrong, cap'n. Wych Street were alongside the church, wau over where de Strand takes a side line up west."

Ben turned on him fiercely.

"What the blazes does a blankety nigger know abaht it? I've told yer where Wych Street was."

"Yus, and I know where it was," interposed Meadows. "Yer both wrong. Wych Street was a turning running from Long Acre into Wellington Street."

"I didn't ask yer what *you* thought," growled Ben.

"Well, I suppose I've a right to an opinion?"

"You always think you know everything, you do."

"You can just keep your mouth shut."

"It 'ud take more'n you to shut it."

Mr. Booth thought it advisable at this juncture to bawl across the bar:—

"Now, gentlemen, no quarrelling."

The affair might have subsided at that point, but for Mrs. Dawes. Her emotions over the death of the old lady in the street had been so stirred that almost unconsciously she had been drinking too much gin. She suddenly screamed out:

"Don't you take no lip from 'im, Mr. Medders. The dirty, thieving devil, 'e always thinks 'e's goin' to come it over everyone."

She stood up threateningly, and one of Ben's supporters gave her a gentle push backwards. In three minutes the bar was in a complete state of pandemonium. The three members of "The Gallows Ring" fought two men and a woman, for Mr. Dawes merely stood in a corner and screamed out:—

"Don't! don't!"

Mrs. Dawes stabbed a man, who had pushed her, through the wrist with a hatpin. Meadows and Ben Orming closed on each other and fought savagely with their naked fists. A lucky blow early in the encounter sent Meadows reeling against the wall, with blood streaming down his temple. Then the coloured man hurled

a pewter tankard straight at Ben and it hit him on the knuckles. The pain maddened him to a frenzy. His other supporter had immediately got to grips with Harry Jones, and picked up one of the high stools and brought it down crash on to the coloured man's skull.

The whole affair was a matter of minutes. Mr. Booth was bawling out in the street. A whistle sounded. People were running in all directions.

"Beat it! Beat it, for God's sake!" called the man who had been stabbed through the wrist. His face was very white.

Ben and the other man, whose name was Toller, dashed to the door. On the pavement there was a confused scramble. Blows were struck indiscriminately. Two policemen appeared. One was laid *hors de combat* by a kick on the knee-cap from Toller. The two men fled into the darkness, followed by a hue-and-cry. Born and bred in the locality, they took every advantage of their knowledge. They tacked through alleys and raced down dark mews, and clambered over walls. Fortunately for them, the people they passed, who might have tripped them up or aided in the pursuit, merely fled indoors. The people in Wapping are not always on the side of the pursuer. But the police held on. At last Ben and Toller slipped through the door of a house in Aztec Street barely ten yards ahead of their nearest pursuer. Blows rained on the door, but they slipped the bolts, and then fell panting to the floor. When Ben could speak, he said:

"If they cop us, it means swinging."

"Was the nigger done in?"

"I think so. But even if he wasn't, there was that other affair the night before last. The game's up."

The ground room floors were shuttered and bolted, but they knew that the police would probably force the front door. At the back there was no escape, only a narrow stable yard, where lanterns were already flashing. The roof only extended thirty yards either way, and the police would probably take possession of it. They made a round of the house, which was sketchily furnished. There was a loaf, a small piece of mutton, and a bottle of pickles, and—the most precious possession—three bottles of whisky. Each man drank half a glass of neat whisky; then Ben said; "We'll be able to keep 'em quiet for a bit, anyway," and he went and fetched an old twelve-bore gun and a case of cartridges. Toller was opposed to this last desperate resort, but Ben continued to murmur: "It means swinging, anyway."

¶

AND thus began the notorious siege of Aztec Street. It lasted three days and four nights. You may remember that, on forcing a panel of the front door, Sub-Inspector Wraithe, of the V Division, was shot through the chest. The police then tried other methods. A hose was brought into play, without effect. Two policemen were killed and four wounded. The military were requisitioned. Snipers occupied windows of the houses opposite. A distinguished member of the Cabinet drove down in a motor-car, and directed operations in a top hat. It was the introduction of poison gas which was the ultimate cause of the downfall of the citadel. The body of Ben Orming was never found, but that of Toller was discovered near the front door, with a bullet through his heart.

The medical officer to the court pronounced that the man had been dead three days, but whether killed deliberately by his fellow-criminal was never revealed. For when the end came Orming had apparently planned a final act of venom. It was known that in the basement a considerable quantity of petrol had been stored. The contents had probably been carefully distributed over the most inflammable materials in the top rooms. The fire broke out, as one witness described it, "almost like an explosion." Orming must have perished in this. The roof blazed up, and the sparks carried across the yard and started a stack of light timber in the annexe of Messrs. Morrel's piano factory. The factory and two blocks of tenement buildings were burnt to the ground. The estimated cost of the destruction was one hundred and eighty thousand pounds. The casualties amounted to seven killed and fifteen wounded.

At the inquiry held under Justice Pengammon, various odd, interesting facts were revealed. Mr. Lowes-Parlby, the brilliant young K.C., distinguished himself by his searching cross-examination of many witnesses. At one point a certain Mrs. Dawes was put in the box.

"Now," said Mr. Lowes-Parlby, "I

understand that on the evening in question, Mrs. Dawes, you and the victims, and these other people who have been mentioned, were all seated in the public bar of the 'Wagtail,' enjoying its no doubt excellent hospitality and indulging in a friendly discussion. Is that so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, will you tell his lordship what you were discussing?"

"Diseases, sir."

"Diseases! And did the argument become acrimonious?"

"Pardon?"

"Was there a serious dispute about diseases?"

"No, sir."

"Well, what was the subject of the dispute?"

"We were arguin' as to where Wych Street was, sir."

"What's that?" said his lordship.

"The witness states, my lord, that they were arguing as to where Wych Street was."

"Wych Street? Do you mean W-Y-C-H?"

"Yes, sir."

"You mean the narrow old street that used to run across the site of what is now the Gaiety Theatre?"

Mr. Lowes-Parlby smiled in his most charming manner.

"Yes, my lord, I believe the witness refers to the same street you mention, though, if I may be allowed to qualify your lordship's description of the locality, may I suggest that it was a little further east—at the side of the old Globe Theatre, which was adjacent to St. Martin's in the Strand? That is the street you were all arguing about, isn't it, Mrs. Dawes?"

"Well, sir, my aunt, who died from eating tinned lobster, used to work at a corset shop. I ought to know."

His lordship ignored the witness. He turned to the counsel rather peevishly:

"Mr. Lowes-Parlby, when I was your age I used to pass through Wych Street every day of my life. I did so for nearly twelve years. I think it hardly necessary for you to contradict me."

The counsel bowed. It was not his place to dispute with a justice, although that justice be a hopeless old fool; but another eminent K.C. rose in the body of the court, and said:

"If I may be allowed to interpose, your lordship, I also spent a great deal of my youth passing through Wych Street. I have gone into the matter, comparing past and present ordnance maps. If I am not mistaken, the street the witness was referring to began near the hoarding at the entrance to the Kingsway and ended at the back of what is now the Aldwych Theatre."

"Oh, no, Mr. Backer!" exclaimed Lowes-Parlby.

His lordship removed his glasses and snapped out:

"The matter is entirely irrelevant to the case."

It certainly was, but the brief passage-of-arms left an unpleasant tang of bitterness behind. It was observed that Mr. Lowes-Parlby never again quite got the prehensile grip upon his cross-examination that he had shown in his treatment of the earlier witnesses. The coloured man, Harry Jones, had died in hospital, but Mr. Booth, the proprietor of the "Wagtail," Baldwin Meadows, Mr. Dawes and the man who was stabbed in the wrist, all gave evidence of a rather nugatory character. Lowes-Parlby could do nothing with it. The findings of this special inquiry do not concern us. It is sufficient to say that the witnesses already mentioned all returned to Wapping. The man who had received the thrust of a hatpin through his wrist did not think it advisable to take any action against Mrs. Dawes.

In a few weeks' time the great Aztec Street siege remained only a romantic memory to the majority of Londoners. To Lowes-Parlby the little dispute with Justice Pengammon rankled unreasonably. It is annoying to be publicly snubbed for making a statement which you know to be absolutely true, and which you have even taken pains to verify. And Lowes-Parlby was a young man accustomed to score. He made a point of looking everything up, of being prepared for an adversary thoroughly. He liked to give the appearance of knowing everything. The brilliant career just ahead of him at times dazzled him. He was one of the darlings of the gods. Everything came to Lowes-Parlby. His father had distinguished himself at the Bar before him, and had amassed a modest fortune. He was an only son. At Oxford he had carried off every possible degree. He was already being spoken of for very high political honours.

But the most sparkling jewel in the crown of his successes was Lady Adela Charters, the daughter of Lord Vermeer, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. She was his fiancée, and it was considered the most brilliant match of the season. She was young and almost pretty, and Lord Vermeer was immensely wealthy and one of the most influential men in Great Britain. Such a combination was irresistible. There seemed to be nothing missing in the life of Francis Lowes-Parlby, K.C.

¶

ONE of the most regular and absorbed spectators at the Aztec inquiry was old Stephen Garrit. Stephen Garrit held a unique but quite inconspicuous position in the legal world at that time. He was a friend of judges, a specialist at various abstruse legal rulings, a man of remarkable memory, and yet—an amateur. He had never taken silk, never eaten the requisite dinners, never passed an examination in his life; but the law of evidence was meat and drink to him. He passed his life in the Temple, where he had chambers. Some of the most eminent counsel in the world would take his opinion, or come to him for advice. He was very old, silent and absorbed. He attended every meeting of the Aztec Street inquiry, but from beginning to end he never volunteered an opinion.

After the inquiry was over he went and visited an old friend at the London Survey Office. He spent two mornings examining maps. After that he spent two mornings pottering about the Strand, Kingsway and Aldwych; then he worked out some careful calculations on a ruled chart. He entered the particulars in a little book which he kept for purposes of that kind, and then retired to his chambers to study other matters. But, before doing so, he entered a little apophthegm in another book. The sentence ran:

"The basic trouble is that people make statements without sufficient data."

Old Stephen need not have appeared in this story at all, except for the fact that he was present at the dinner at Lord Vermeer's, where a rather deplorable incident occurred. And you must acknowledge that in the circumstances it is useful to have such a valuable and efficient witness.

Lord Vermeer was a competent, forceful man, a little quick-tempered and autocratic. He came from Lancashire, and before entering politics had made an enormous fortune out of artificial manure.

It was a small dinner party, with a motive behind it. His principal guest was Mr. Sandeman, the London agent of the Ameer of Bakkan. Lord Vermeer was very anxious to impress Mr. Sandeman and to be very friendly with him; the reasons will appear later. Mr. Sandeman was a self-confessed cosmopolitan. He professed to be equally at home in any capital in Europe. London had been his headquarters for over twenty years. Lord Vermeer also invited Mr. Arthur Toombs, a colleague in the Cabinet, his prospective son-in-law, Lowes-Parlby, K.C., James Trolley, a very tame Socialist M.P., and Sir Henry and Lady Breyd, the two latter being invited, not because Sir Henry was of any use but because Lady Breyd was a pretty and brilliant woman who might amuse his principal guest. The sixth guest was Stephen Garrit.

The dinner was a great success. When the succession of courses eventually came to a stop, and the ladies had retired, Lord Vermeer conducted his male guests into another room for a ten minutes' smoke before rejoining them. It was then that the unfortunate incident occurred. There was no love lost between Lowes-Parlby and Mr. Sandeman. It is difficult to ascribe the real reason of their mutual animosity, but on the several occasions when they had met there had invariably passed a certain sardonic by-play. They were both clever, both comparatively young; moreover, it was said in some quarters that Mr. Sandeman had had intentions himself with regard to Lord Vermeer's daughter, that he had been on the point of a proposal when Lowes-Parlby had butted in and forestalled him.

Mr. Sandeman had dined well, and he was in the mood to dazzle with a display of his varied knowledge and experiences. The conversation drifted from a discussion of the rival claims of great cities to the slow, inevitable removal of old landmarks. There had been a slightly acrimonious disagreement between Lowes-Parlby and Mr. Sandeman as to the claims of Budapest and Lisbon, and Mr. Sandeman had scored because he extracted from his rival a confession that, though he had spent two months in Budapest, he had only spent two days in Lisbon. Mr. Sandeman had

lived for four years in either city. Lowes-Parlby changed the subject abruptly.

"Talking of landmarks," he said, "we had a queer point arise in that Aztec Street inquiry. The original dispute arose owing to a discussion between a crowd of people in a pub as to where Wych Street was."

"I remember," said Lord Vermeer. "A perfectly absurd discussion. Why, I should have thought that any man over forty would remember exactly where it was."

"Where would you say it was, sir?" asked Lowes-Parlby.

"Why, to be sure, it ran from the corner of Chancery Lane and ended at the second turning after the Law Courts, going west."

Lowes-Parlby was about to reply, when Mr. Sandeman cleared his throat and said, in his supercilious, oily voice:

"Excuse me, my lord. I know my Paris, and Vienna, and Lisbon, every brick and stone, but I look upon London as my home. I know my London even better. I have a perfectly clear recollection of Wych Street. When I was a student I used to visit there to buy books. It ran parallel to New Oxford Street on the south side, just between it and Lincoln's Inn Fields."

There was something about this assertion that infuriated Lowes-Parlby. In the first place, it was so hopelessly wrong and asserted so insufferably. In the second place, he was already smarting under the indignity of being shown up about Lisbon. And then there suddenly flashed through his mind the wretched incident when he had been publicly snubbed by Justice Pengammon about the very same point; and he knew that he was right. Damn Wych Street! He turned on Mr. Sandeman.

"Oh, nonsense! You may know something about these—eastern cities; you certainly know nothing about London if you make a statement like that. Wych Street was a little farther east of what is now the Gaiety Theatre. It used to run by the side of the Old Globe Theatre, parallel to the Strand."

The dark moustache of Mr. Sandeman shot upwards, revealing a narrow line of yellow teeth. He uttered a sound that was a mingling of contempt and derision:

"Really? How wonderful—to have such comprehensive knowledge!"

He laughed, and his small eyes fixed his rival. Lowes-Parlby flushed a deep red. He gulped down half a glass of port and muttered just above a whisper: "Damned impudence!" Then, in the rudest manner he could display, he turned his back deliberately on Sandeman and walked out of the room.

¶

IN the company of Adela he tried to forget the little contretemps. The whole thing was so absurd—so utterly undignified. As though *he* didn't know! It was the little accumulation of pin-pricks all arising out of that one argument. The result had suddenly goaded him to—well, to be rude, to say the least of it. It wasn't that Sandeman mattered. To the devil with Sandeman! But what would his future father-in-law think? He had never before given way to any show of ill-temper before him. He forced himself into a mood of rather fatuous jocularity. Adela was at her best in those moods. They would have lots of fun together in the days to come. Her almost pretty, not too clever face was dimpled with kittenish glee. Life was a tremendous rag to her. They were expecting La Toccata, the famous opera-singer. She had been engaged at a very high fee to come on from Covent Garden. Mr. Sandeman was very fond of music.

Adela was laughing and discussing which was the most honourable position for the great Sandeman to occupy. There came to Lowes-Parlby a sudden abrupt misgiving. What sort of wife would Adela be to him when they were not just fooling? He immediately dismissed the curious, furtive little stab of doubt. The splendid proportions of the room calmed his senses. A huge bowl of dark red roses quickened his perceptions. His career—— The door opened. But it was not La Toccata. It was one of the household flunkeys.

"Excuse me, sir. His lordship says will you kindly go and see him in the library?"

Lowes-Parlby regarded the messenger, and his heart beat quickly. An uncontrollable presage of evil racked his nerve-centres. Something had gone wrong, and yet the whole thing was so absurd, trivial. In a crisis—well, he could always apologize. He smiled confidently at Adela, and said:

"Why, of course; with pleasure. Please excuse me, dear."

He followed the impressive servant out of the room. His foot had barely touched the carpet of the library when he realized that his worst apprehensions were to be

plumbed to the depths. For a moment he thought Lord Vermeer was alone, then he observed old Stephen Garrit, lying in an easy chair in the corner like a piece of crumpled parchment. Lord Vermeer did not beat about the bush.

"What the devil have you done?"

"Excuse me, sir. I'm afraid I don't understand. Is it Sandeman?"

"Sandeman has gone."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"Sorry! By God, I should think you might be sorry! You insulted him. My prospective son-in-law insulted him in my own house!"

"I'm awfully sorry, sir. I didn't realize . . ."

"Realize! Sit down, and don't assume for one moment that you continue to be my prospective son-in-law. Your insult was a most intolerable piece of effrontery, not only to him, but to me."

"But I . . ."

"Listen to me. Do you know that the Government were on the verge of concluding a most far-reaching treaty with that man? Do you know that the position was just touch-and-go? The concessions we were prepared to make would have cost the State thirty million pounds, and it would have been cheap. Do you hear that? It would have been cheap! Bakkan is one of the most vulnerable outposts of the Empire. It is a terrible danger zone. If certain powers can usurp our authority—and mark you, the whole blamed place is already riddled with this new pernicious doctrine—you know what I mean—before we know where we are the whole East will be ablaze. India! My God! This contract we were negotiating would have countered this outward thrust. And you, you blockhead, you come here and insult the man upon whose word the whole thing depends."

"I really can't see, sir, how I should know all this."

"You can't see it! But, you fool, you seemed to go out of your way. You insulted him about the merest quibble—in my house!"

"He said he knew where Wych Street was. He was wrong. I corrected him."

"Wych Street! Wych Street be damned! If he said Wych Street was in the moon you should have agreed. There was no call to act in the way you did. And you—you think of going into politics!"

The somewhat cynical inference of this remark went unnoticed. Lowes-Parlby was too unnerved. He mumbled:

"I'm very sorry."

"I don't want your sorrow. I want something more practical."

"What's that, sir?"

"You will drive straight to Mr. Sandeman's, find him, and apologize. Tell him you find that he was right about Wych Street after all. If you can't find him to-night, you must find him to-morrow morning. I give you till midday to-morrow. If by that time you have not offered a handsome apology to Mr. Sandeman, you do not enter this house again, or see my daughter again. Moreover, all the power I possess will be devoted to hounding you out of that profession you have dishonoured. Now you can go."

Dazed and shaken, Lowes-Parlby drove back to his flat at Knightsbridge. Before acting he must have time to think. Lord Vermeer had given him till to-morrow midday. Any apologizing that was done should be done after a night's reflection. The fundamental purposes of his being were to be tested. He knew that. Some deep instinct within him was grossly outraged. Is it that a point comes when success demands that a man shall sell his soul? It was all so absurdly trivial—a mere argument about the position of a street that had ceased to exist. As Lord Vermeer said, what did it matter about Wych Street?

Of course he should apologize. It would hurt horribly to do so, but would a man sacrifice everything on account of some footling argument about a street?

In his own rooms, Lowes-Parlby put on a dressing-gown, and lighting a pipe, he sat before the fire. He would have given anything for companionship at such a moment—the right companionship. How lovely it would be to have—a woman, just the right woman, to talk this all over with; someone who understood and sympathized. A sudden vision came to him of Adela's face grinning about the prospective visit of La Toccata, and again the low voice of misgiving whispered in his ears. Would Adela be—just the right woman? In very truth, did he really love Adela? Or was it all . . . a rag? Was life a rag—a game played by lawyers, politicians, and people?

The fire burned low, but still he continued to sit thinking, his mind principally occupied with the dazzling visions of the

future. It was past midnight when he muttered a low "Damn!" and walked to the bureau. He took up a pen and wrote:

"DEAR MR. SANDEMAN,—I must apologize for acting so rudely to you last night. It was quite unpardonable of me, especially as I find since, on going into the matter, that you were quite right about the position of Wych Street. I can't think how I made the mistake. Please forgive me.—Yours cordially,

"FRANCIS LOWES-PARLBY."

Having written this, he sighed and went to bed. One might have imagined at that point that the matter was finished. But there are certain little greedy demons of conscience that require a lot of stilling, and they kept Lowes-Parlby awake more than half the night. He kept on repeating to himself "It's all positively absurd!" But the little greedy demons pranced around the bed, and they began to group things into two definite issues. On the one side, the great appearances; on the other, something that could only be expressed by one word—truth. If he had *really* loved Adela—if he weren't so absolutely certain that Sandeman was wrong and he was right—why should he have to say that Wych Street was where it wasn't?

"Isn't there, after all," said one of the little demons, "something which makes for greater happiness than success? Confess this, and we'll let you sleep."

Perhaps that is one of the most potent weapons the little demons possess. However full our lives may be, we ever long for moments of tranquillity. And conscience holds before our eyes the mirror of an ultimate tranquillity. Lowes-Parlby was certainly not himself. The debonair and brilliant egoist was tortured almost beyond control; and it had all apparently arisen through the ridiculous discussion about a street. At a quarter past three in the morning he arose from his bed with a groan, and, going into the other room, he tore the letter to Mr. Sandeman to pieces.

¶

THREE weeks later old Stephen Garrit was lunching with the Lord Chief Justice. They were old friends, and they never found it incumbent to be very conversational. The lunch was an excellent but frugal meal. They both ate slowly and thoughtfully, and their drink was water. It was not till they reached the dessert stage that his lordship indulged in any very informative comment, and then he recounted to Stephen the details of a recent case in which he considered that the presiding judge, by an unprecedented paralogy, misinterpreted the Law of Evidence. Stephen listened with absorbed attention. He took two cob-nuts from the silver dish, and turned them over meditatively, without cracking them. When his lordship had stated his opinion Stephen mumbled:

"I have been impressed, very impressed indeed. Even in my own fields of—limited observation—the opinion of an outsider, you may say—so often it happens—the trouble caused by an affirmation without sufficiently established data. I have seen lives lost, ruin brought about, endless suffering. Only last week, a young man—a brilliant career—almost shattered. People make statements without——"

He put the nuts back on the dish, and then, in an apparently irrelevant manner, he said abruptly:

"Do you remember Wych Street, my lord?"

The Lord Chief Justice grunted.

"Wych Street! Of course I do?"

"Where would you say it was, my lord?"

"Why, here, of course."

His lordship took a pencil from his pocket and sketched a plan on the tablecloth.

"It used to run from there to here."

Stephen adjusted his glasses and carefully examined the plan. He took a long time to do this, and when he had finished his hand instinctively went towards a breast pocket where he kept a notebook with little squared pages. Then he stopped and sighed. After all, why argue with the law? The law was like that—an excellent thing, not infallible, of course (even the plan of the Lord Chief Justice was a quarter of a mile out), but still an excellent, a wonderful thing. He examined the bony knuckles of his hands and yawned slightly.

"Do you remember it?" said the Lord Chief Justice.

Stephen nodded sagely, and his voice seemed to come from a long way off:

"Yes, I remember it, my lord. It was a melancholy little street."

A Hard Case

A comedy of a boy and a saucepan

By FRED JAY

WITH an impatient exclamation Mrs. Hicks stopped her machine with a jerk that broke the needle, and, resting her head on her hands, gazed wearily out of the window at the damp squalor of the next street backs. The prospect was far from cheering, and with considerable emphasis the widow expressed aloud to herself her opinion of wet days. For one thing the light was bad, and it made her eyes ache, and a deafening clamour from the kitchen below extended the pain over her head. For on wet days her nine-year-old Jimmy was not allowed to play in the streets, and would not play alone indoors. With the able assistance of a companion of his own age he succeeded in producing a racket that Mrs. Hicks described as "Bedlam, and past all earthly endurance."

"Jimmy!" she called shrilly from the top of the carpetless stairs. "Just stop that dretful row—my 'ead's splittin'."

"We're only playin' at soldiers," shouted Jimmy, protestingly.

"Well, I can't stand the awful noise no longer—why can't you play at policemen for a change?"

Quietness being temporarily restored, the distracted mother returned to her work. But soon another bloodthirsty engagement was in progress—the din of battle grew terrific, and climaxed in one long piercing shriek from the vanquished. A deadly silence followed, and Mrs. Hicks went to the landing again.

"What's the matter *now?*"

There were sounds below of a stealthy and diplomatic retreat from the premises, and Mrs. Hicks descended to investigate. A muffled sobbing proceeded from the kitchen, where, huddled up in a corner, a pathetic figure was vainly endeavouring to get its head out of a saucepan.

"Jimmy! wot 'ave you been and done to yourself?"

With more energy than skill the frenzied mother applied herself to his extrication, and brought forth nothing but cries of anguish from the pot. Ignoring the appealing protests from within, she continued vigorous efforts with a set face, until the one coherent word "nose," repeated with painful and increasing vehemence, prevailed upon her at last to desist.

If Jimmy sat on the floor to cry in his helplessness, not so Mrs. Hicks, who was a woman of resource. She dived swiftly behind the kitchen door for her jacket, and put her bonnet on straight without the aid of a looking-glass. Jimmy, already attired in an overcoat which was supposed to lend a military appearance, needed no further protection from the weather, and Mrs. Hicks, after wasting ten minutes searching for his cap, laughed hysterically at her stupidity, and dragged him hurriedly round the corner to the chemist's.

The first shock of the thing nearly rendered the apothecary speechless, but, recovering from his surprise, he declared he could do nothing, and after hesitating for some time between a blacksmith and a doctor, recommended the services of the latter.

The nearest doctor resided half a mile down the street, whither Mrs. Hicks, unmoved by the playful comment of a small but intensely interested crowd that followed in the rear, guided her bonneted and bellowing boy.

The doctor was in, and having diagnosed the case, blacked his hands and confessed his inability to get the boy out. "You must take him to the hospital," he said. "Shall I send for a cab?"

Mrs. Hicks, with whom cabs were an unknown luxury, said a tram would have to do.

"Well, you had better wait in the hall till a green one passes," said the doctor. "There is quite a crowd outside."

They remained in sanctuary till the right car jingled up. A policeman stopped it, and, having with difficulty cleared an avenue

through the expectant throng, escorted Mrs. Hicks and the distinguished Jimmy along it, and handed them over to the care of the conductor.

A titter ran round the car as they took their seats, a stout old gentleman in the corner tittering himself purple.

"I don't see wot there is to laugh at," exclaimed Mrs. Hicks, her nostrils quivering with indignation.

"I'm very sorry," protested the old gentleman, with difficulty. "But 'pon my soul, I can't help it!"

Mrs. Hicks regarded him with a stony and frigid glare, until his complexion assumed its normal crimson.

"'E's been playin' soldiers," she explained to the other passengers, "and got it fixed on 'is 'ead. I'm takin' 'im to the 'ospital. Nice time I've 'ad with 'im, I give you my word. Sit still, Jimmy, or you'll 'ave the 'andle through the winder."

A shiver of glass accompanied the belated warning, and Mrs. Hicks threw up her arms in despair.

"There! You little wretch! Now I shall 'ave to pay for that!"

Hard work and a hard life had produced in Mrs. Hicks a stoicism which was not, however, proof against this last catastrophe. There were tears in her eyes when the conductor, having assessed the damage, apologetically mentioned the sum of three and sixpence.

"A cab would 'ave been cheaper after all," sniffed Mrs. Hicks, fumbling in a greasy purse. "And wot's more, there wouldn't 'ave been no annoyance!"

"I hope you will allow me to pay for it," said the stout old gentleman, kindly.

"Not if it took my last penny!" exclaimed Mrs. Hicks, with injured pride.

"I'm sorry to have hurt your feelings," said the other, slipping a shilling into Jimmy's hand. "You won't object, I hope, to my giving the little fellow a trifle to spend when he comes out of the saucepan?"

Jimmy's grimy little hand closed over the coin, and running his thumb-nail round the milled edge of what might have been a half-penny, he suddenly stopped his melancholy sobbing.

The generous example was followed by a young and simple-minded lady, who extracted a sponge cake from a paper bag, and gave it to the sufferer. In his frantic efforts to squeeze it between the extinguisher and his chin, the cake crumbled and fell to the floor; the failure to reach his mouth opening up a terrible prospect to the unhappy prisoner, he recommenced his plaintive moaning.

"Stop that row!" snapped Mrs. Hicks.

"Poor little chap!" exclaimed the young lady, "please don't scold him—I expect he's hungry. There was nothing in the pan when he put it on, I suppose?"

Mrs. Hicks eyed the sympathizer suspiciously, and made no audible reply; and the stout old gentleman, finding his handkerchief in haste, attacked his nose with unwarranted violence.

"I suppose," remarked a wan matron sitting next to Jimmy, "I suppose it *will* come orf somehow. There, don't cry, my dear," she added, patting the handle encouragingly, "I know 'ow he must feel, I 'ad a ring on once wot wouldn't come orf. 'Ave you tried soaping 'im, ma'am?"

Mrs. Hicks replied to the effect that, oddly enough, soap had not occurred to her.

"They'll get him out all right at the hospital," said a man nursing a toolbag. "It's wonderful wot them surgeons can do nowadays with the knife."

A picturesque and detailed account of his eldest sister's youngest child who had a button-hook fixed up his nose was interrupted, so far as Mrs. Hicks was concerned, by the conductor stopping the car at a cross road, and directing her to the fifth turning on the left.

The passage to the hospital was made with difficulty, some members of the inevitable procession forging ahead with eagerness for a front view. But with a free use of her elbow as a broadside, and a freer misuse of her snapping tongue, Mrs. Hicks at last steered her iron-clad safely into port.

The hospital people were reassuring, and, promising a satisfactory extrication, requested her to return for the patient in a couple of hours' time. With a lighter heart Mrs. Hicks made her way home, and with a longing to pour out her trouble into some friendly and sympathetic ear, called on Mrs. Tippet, the mother of Jimmy's playfellow. She commenced and concluded her harrowing experiences on the door-mat, and Mrs. Tippet, exclaiming "Fancy!" for the fiftieth time, invited the narrator in to a cup of tea.

"Wot won't the little wretches do next?" said the hostess, sipping the refreshing

beverage. "'Ere's my Dickie not been 'ome since the morning."

"'E was playin' with my Jimmy when it 'appened," said Mrs. Hicks. "I expect 'e's hidin' somewhere till it's all over."

"One's as bad as another," asserted Mrs. Tippet. "I'll tell 'is father to give 'im a good leatherin' when he comes in. I ain't been strong enough to do it myself since Prudence was born."

The various principles with regard to the proper upbringing of boys were discussed fully and impartially for half an hour, and Mrs. Hicks got up.

"It's time I was gettin' back to the 'ospital," she said.

"You won't find 'im none the worse," said Mrs. Tippet, encouragingly. "Little imp! If 'e was my boy I'd stop sich monkey tricks. I'd knock his 'ead off."

In spite of these Spartan theories, Mrs. Hicks, nearing the hospital, was not without some feelings of anxiety. So far from contemplating any such reprisal as decapitation, it was a foregone conclusion that Jimmy's blinking reappearance in daylight would be greeted with a kiss. The day's expenses were mounting up to a sum she could ill afford, but Mrs. Hicks was unable to pass a greengrocer's shop without purchasing a pennyworth of cohesive dates. Lower down the street she stopped at a toy bazaar to invest threepence in "something for a little boy." A painstaking young salesman strongly recommended a box of leaden soldiers, but Mrs. Hicks, rejecting the suggestion with a vehemence that astonished the shopman, selected a magnet, and continued her journey to the hospital.

"He's none the worse for his adventure," said the surgeon, meeting Mrs. Hicks in the corridor. He threw open the door of a waiting room, at the far end of which a small figure was seated, half hidden by a comic paper. "He won't find anything there half so funny as he looked himself an hour ago."

The paper lowered, and Mrs. Hicks started back, uttering a faint shriek.

"That—that ain't my Jimmy!" she exclaimed.

"I don't know anything about that," said the surgeon, "but you can take my word for it, that's the boy who came out of the saucepan."

When Mrs. Hicks trusted herself to look once more in the direction of the changeling, she gave yet another shriek.

"Dickie! Is it you?" she cried.

Master Tippet unhesitatingly admitted his identity. "Why ain't mother come for me?" he asked.

Mrs. Hicks thought of Mrs. Tippet sitting comfortably at home before the fire, and, for the first time in her life, perhaps, the supply of words wherewith to express her agitated ideas failed her. "We'll go and ask her," was all she said.

Ten minutes' walk in the cool, damp air somewhat restored her shattered nerves, and, her mother's heart touched at the sight of Dickie's pale face, she remembered the dates and magnet. Putting the latter in his pocket, Dickie quickly found an unsuitable receptacle for the sticky fruit.

"Are you hungry?" asked Mrs. Hicks.

"Awfully," replied the boy.

"Then you'd better have some tea with the shilling the old gentleman in the tram gave you."

Dickie stopped suddenly, and regarded her with perplexity.

"Was it you in the tram with me?" he asked.

"'Course it was," said Mrs. Hicks. "You don't suppose your own mother would trouble about you, do you?"

"I don't suppose nothin'," said Dickie. "It's been just like a awful dream."

They turned into a confectioner's, where the boy consumed with avidity a whole shillingsworth of farinaceous foodstuff while Mrs. Hicks looked on, mentally preparing a little speech to meet the case for Mrs. Tippet's benefit. On nearing home she stopped at the corner to give a summarized account of her misfortunes to a passing neighbour, and Dickie, unobserved, slipped quietly away home.

It was nearly an hour later when Mrs. Tippet, in response to a lively cannonade upon her knocker, opened the door to Mrs. Hicks.

"All's well, I 'ope," she said with friendly anxiety. "Come in."

Mrs. Hicks was trembling to such an extent that words failed her until seated in the parlour.

"All ain't well, Mrs. Tippet," she said in quavering tones.

"Don't tell me!" exclaimed the other. "Don't tell me they can't get poor little Jimmy out!"

"I ain't goin' to," said Mrs. Hicks, warming to her work. "Jimmy was never in, and you know it. Don't try my patience

too far, ma'am. After doin' all your dirty work, I ain't one to stand bein' jeered at. 'Ere I've lost a day's work, spent no end of money, been scurried about in the mud and wet, laughed at and insulted, worried near to death about the brat—and I gets this at the end of it. Seems to me, Mrs. Tippet——"

"Seems to me the worry's turned your 'ead, Mrs. Hicks."

"I'm a idiot for my pains, ma'am, no doubt, but I ain't agoin' to 'ave you tell me so. That takes it, it does. The next time your boy gets his 'ead in one o' my sorcepans, I'll get 'im out myself, and what's more, I'll do it without damagin' my goods."

"My boy!" said the astonished Mrs. Tippet. "You're wandering, Mrs. Hicks, he's been in bed this last hour. Dickie ain't silly enough to go and do a thing like that."

"'E's silly enough to do it uncommonly well, I give you my word," replied Mrs. Hicks with heat. "And as for wandering, ma'am, p'raps you'd be after trailin' about all day with a—with a ridiculous waxworks."

"I shouldn't 'ave done it if it 'ad been my boy," said Mrs. Tippet. "A good sharp tap with a brick would 'ave done the job all right. Seems to me you put yourself to all the trouble on account of your old sorcepan. And it ain't a bit of good you tryin' to make out it was my Dickie. Don't tell me a mother wouldn't know 'er own boy, face or no face. One thing, Dickie don't wear patched boots, Mrs. Hicks. I suppose you didn't notice 'em?"

"I noticed on the way back they was all down at heel, and three sizes too big," retorted Mrs. Hicks. "Jimmy, poor boy, ain't got a father."

"A pity 'e ain't," said Mrs. Tippet. "'E might 'ave kept 'im out of mischief."

"Anyway, I'll trouble you for the three and sixpence for the broken winder," said Mrs. Hicks.

Mrs. Tippet laughed. "I'll pay for it," she said, "when you've proved it was my boy who broke it."

"Ask Dickie, he tells the truth sometimes. I've 'eard say he picks it up from his father."

"You're dreamin', I tell you," said Mrs. Tippet, "or maybe it's the tea. Try takin' milk in it."

"Ask Dickie," repeated Mrs. Hicks, pale with wrath.

In response to an imperative demand from below, the unfortunate boy, whose trials for the day were not yet over, crawled from his warm bed, and descending slowly in his night-shirt endeavoured to detect from the inflexion in his mother's voice the nature of the reception that awaited him.

"Come here, dear," cooed Mrs. Tippet. "Don't stand shiverin' in the draught. Now tell your mother where you've been all day."

"Out," replied Dickie, cautiously.

"In, you mean," said Mrs. Hicks, with an hysterical laugh.

"Don't mind her," said Mrs. Tippet. "Just answer me truthful now like a good Dickie. 'Ave you been for a tram ride with Mrs. Hicks to-day?"

Dickie looked at his mother, and remembering the claws that lay concealed within the silky paw, hedged diplomatically.

"I ain't never seen 'er in a tram in my life," he said.

Mrs. Tippet turned an exultant smile upon Mrs. Hicks.

"We walked back," said the latter, shortly.

"You ain't by any chance," continued Mrs. Tippet, "been wearing a sorcepan instead of a 'at to-day?"

"No," answered Dickie, avoiding Mrs. Hicks' eye.

"Nor been to no 'ospital for anything?"

"No."

"Well, that proves it, I should think," said Mrs. Tippet triumphantly.

"It proves 'e's a boy of yours," said Mrs. Hicks, getting up to go. "P'raps I've been dreaming it all as you say. Well, good night, Dickie. I 'ope you ain't lost the magnet I give you?"

"No," said Dickie, unguardedly.

"What's that?" exclaimed Mrs. Tippet, sharply.

"Don't mind your mother for a minute, Dickie," continued Mrs. Hicks. "Just tell me the truth, now. What did I buy you the magnet for?"

It is in the nature of little boys to tell lies, but they are not all naturally ungrateful. Dickie suddenly burst into a flood of tears. "I'm sorry," he sobbed; "I'll give it to Jimmy to-morrow."

"No, you keep it," said Mrs. Hicks, not unkindly. "But you did go in a tram with me to-day, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"With a sorcepan on your 'ead?"

"Yes! Oh dear, yes!"

"And they got it orf at the 'ospital?"

"Yes."

With sudden violence Mrs. Tippet seized him by the night-shirt. "Look 'ere, you little wretch," she demanded fiercely. "Who've you been lyin' to—me or Mrs. Hicks?"

Dickie's voice was lost in a fit of vibrating sobs; and, an idea occurring suddenly to his mother, the claws disappeared again.

"Poor boy," she said, "'e's too much upset to know wot 'e's sayin' of. There, don't cry, dear," she added, running her fingers soothingly through his matted hair.

The simple and motherly expression of fondness terminated abruptly, and Mrs. Tippet, giving a faint scream, held out her hands fastidiously at arms' length.

"Grease!" she exclaimed, and rubbed her hands vigorously upon her apron. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Hicks, to 'ave disbelieved you—*this* is proof enough for me!"

Mrs. Hicks turned livid at the outrage, and, trembling with indignation, seized upon the apron. "It's false," she cried. "Let me see it! Ugh! Why it's caked with grease all over!"

Letting go her hold of the garment, she regarded her hands for a moment with an expression of unspeakable disgust, and crossing over to Dickie, wiped them with great deliberation upon his hair.

"I'm sorry, Dickie," she said, bestowing an exultant smile upon Mrs. Tippet. "You'll 'ave to wash your 'ead to-morrow."

"No fear," said Dickie, "they did it at the 'ospital to-day!"

A minute later Mrs. Hicks arrived at her own door, and letting herself in, sank wearily into the parlour armchair. A sound of stealthy footsteps proceeded from the stairs as Jimmy, an innocent contributor to his mother's misfortune, retired discreetly for the night. Meditating upon the harassing incidents of the day, Mrs. Hicks removed her muddied boots, and judging to a nicety the time occupied in juvenile disrobing, she summoned her remaining strength, and, selecting a clothes brush, ascended as stealthily herself.

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The English Tutor

A romance of chivalry in modern Russia

By PERCEVAL GIBBON

THE bitter miles of the road, rough with frost-crisped mud that bruised his feet through the broken soles of his shoes, had taken toll of his endurance; the early dark of the Russian November afternoon, venomous with cold, had gathered in about him over the featureless and desert lands. Somewhere in that solitude and desolation there lurked the house which he had come forth to seek—the fabled criminal house, the direction of which had been given to him in a flutter of whispers—where food was to be had, a sackful for a diamond ring, a truckload for a pair of sound boots. The rumour of its existence had currency in the misery of Moscow like a tale of buried treasure.

"There are no other houses near it. The village is farther on. It stands alone."

It was the woman whom once or twice he had seen and passed on the stairs of the great appartement-building which housed him who had told him that. He had never before spoken to her, but he thought he remembered to have heard that she was a nun, escaped with her life, at least, from the plunder and destruction of her convent. She had been coming down the stairs when he returned from his shuddering day-long wait in the four-deep queue at one of the Soviet's depôts of edible garbage. He had a loaf in the pocket of his overcoat; as they neared each other her eyes went to the bulge it made and rose thence to his face. He smiled faintly and ruefully and drew aside to let her pass.

Instead of passing she stood still on the step above him and continued to look at him.

Godfrey Hope was a youth in the middle twenties. He wore the wreck of a quilted overcoat and a baldish old astrakhan cap; his shoes were bound together with rope-yarns, and he had a sack folded shawl-fashion about his neck. And for all that, he was as English as afternoon tea. Yes, afternoon tea; the same gentle and genteel amenity, the same small and taking formality that goes properly with the silver vessels and the pretty china. He was of the middle height, slender to the point of flimsiness, small and delicate in feature, and when he made way for a lady, or raised his hat, or performed any minor courtesy, the scenery of a drawing-room seemed to shape in the air about him.

The nun, if she was one, stood some seconds ere she spoke, surveying him with a swiftly narrowed interest.

"Bread?" she asked, suddenly.

"Yes," he said, and drew forth the loaf to show her—a thing roughly globular, about the size of two large fists, mud-coloured and seemingly made of mud.

It had to suffice for himself and two others who awaited him huddled in their fireless room above, but he knew he would not deny her a share if she needed it.

"Wait!" she said. "I'll tell you. Wait!"

She bent over the stair-rail, scouting with wary eyes for possible eavesdroppers. They had the stairway to themselves for the moment; and across the great gulf of purpose and experience that parted them, she reached as it were, a hand, crippled and defiled, yet tendering a gift. She spoke and he listened intently.

"There *is* such a place, then?"

"Truly—truly!" she declared, still in a whisper, but with a manner of passionate assertion. "Would I tell you in jest? Bread not like that loaf you have there; and potatoes; and sometimes other things! I have been there. Why do you doubt me?"

"I don't," he answered, "since you assure me," he added. "I am awfully grateful. But I can't help wondering why you have told it to me, of all people."

Again she steadied her look upon him. She did not smile; it was unthinkable that a smile should ever break upon the breathless tensity of her face. But a sort of bitterness of mirth flickered in the smoulder of her eyes.

He never saw her again.

Godfrey Hope had been English tutor to the little grandson of Prince and Princess Orlovsky, living with his employers in their great old country house among the woods of Kaluga. The boy's father and mother had fetched him away before the moment when Russia went rabid; Hope had stayed on through the *jacquerie*, when the season of murder and rapine was opened and it was too late to get out of the country. He had smuggled his prince and princess to Moscow, with their jewellery and their worthless store of money hidden on their bodies; he was still with them, finding them food as he could, interposing the little he had of strength and resource between them and the blessings of the Red Millennium, comforting them and drugging them to tranquillity with his little forms of deference and decorum of manners. They were old, and the times had multiplied their years—old and simple and helpless. They had never known the rough surfaces of life; to desert them would be worse than brutal and cowardly—it would have been caddish!

"That damned house!"

He came to a standstill on the dark road, baffled; all the afternoon he had limped and trudged upon his quest, and now, at last, he was ready to turn back, spent and empty-handed, to the familiar misery whence he had come. He began to do so; he was in the act of turning, when the house itself seemed suddenly to stand up in the darkness, actual and near, its thatched roof humped like a stooped back against the lesser gloom of the sky—as though it crouched there in hiding.

"It stands alone!" The nun had made a point of that; and it seemed to him now, when he approached it and paused to take stock of it, that no other house had ever been so alone. It stood like a tombstone in a desert.

¶

NO light showed at any chink in the sealed door and windows; only the single chimney breathed forth a slim spire of smoke that poised straight as a rod, ghost-like and steady in the windless air. It needed no more; this was the place. He raised his hand and beat upon the door.

Through the thickness of its planks there came to him no stir of movement within. The door fell open without warning. The shape of a man filled its place, a mere bulk of lowered, peering head, and massive body silhouetted against a glow of light inside the cottage.

"*Shoto takoe?*" demanded the man. "What is it?"

The sudden opening of the door took him by surprise.

"*Prostitye*—forgive me! I—er—I came—I was told that you—er——"

"*Nu!*" The man in the door broke in upon him. He had a deep voice that boomed with cracks of a shriller harshness in it. "It's food, of course! You want to buy food, eh?"

"Yes," he faltered feebly. "I—er——"

"Of course!" boomed the other. "I knew it! Another cursed bourgeois come begging!"

Godfrey Hope had a spasm of agony; it looked as though the man were going to close the door and the subject together.

In mere desperation he took a quick step forward.

"No!" he cried urgently. "No—I'm not. I'm—I'm an Englishman."

It was not what he had wanted to say, but in that stress he had to take words as they came to him; and even as he babbled them forth he was aware of their irrelevance. But the other man stopped short and bent to stare at him again.

"Englishman?" he repeated stupidly.

It was a moment of respite, at any rate; and Hope gathered himself to profit by it.

"Yes," he answered, "an Englishman; and I've brought some very fine things to show you if you'll let me come in for a minute. Just a minute!" he urged, with a sudden force, for while he had been standing still the cold had gnawed in him and he yearned to that glowing indoors he could see beyond the peasant's bulky shoulders. "Beautiful things they are; they belong to a prince. You'll want them when you see them!"

The mujik grunted his indifference to all fine and beautiful things. But his mind hung as on a hook upon the other matters.

"An Englishman!" he said again. "I thought they were all dead. Come inside and let us have a look at you!"

The odorous, breath-laden, heat-saturated air of the interior received him like a bath. The flat-topped brick stove, with tumbled bedding and bundles stowed upon it, stood with its door open; there was a lamp, too, upon a table; and at the table sat people—a woman, a young girl, and a

small boy, who raised slow-witted faces to stare at him.

The mujik who had admitted him explained him to the rest.

"An Englishman," he said, "come for food! Are you hungry, Englishman?"

There were bowls upon the table, which enriched the room's population of odours with the bouquet of *shchi*, that cabbage soup which is to Russia what macaroni is to Italy, at once an institution and a symbol. Hope had evidently come upon the family at supper.

The mujik accompanied his words with a jerked thumb of contemptuous invitation towards the table. Seen in the light, he was a thick-set, blunt-faced man of middle age, with a short, brindled beard. There was a sneer on his lips as he waved the stranger to the food. It was nothing to him, this stuff that gave life and strength.

But it was an invitation of sorts, and to Godfrey Hope an invitation was like a cue to an actor. Desire was ravenous throughout all his body; but he smiled deprecatingly.

"That's awfully good of you," he said. "But I couldn't think of disturbing your supper."

"Eh?"

The big mujik did not understand. He frowned in an effort of thought, hanging midway between embarrassment and resentment. Then the explanation occurred to him. He nodded to his wife.

"I told you—he is an Englishman," he said, and sat down to his own steaming bowl.

There was a wooden stool near the open fire-door of the stove, and Hope, unwinding the sack from his neck, sat down upon it.

"Englishmen don't eat *shchi!*"

It was the girl. She made the statement as though she were giving the answer to a riddle. He had to look round, and, of course, he looked round smiling. She sat facing him, with the boy, a dirty urchin of about ten, at her side. She herself was, perhaps, fifteen, skinny-armed, with disproportionately large knuckles to the bony hand that poised the wooden spoon before her ready-opened mouth. Her neck was meagre to the point of deformity, a mere stringy stalk for her head and for the sheer wonder of the perfect face, a long oval—the Madonna shape—that fronted him. She had fair hair with brown shades in it, like scorched flax; and the blue eyes under the broad and serene brow seemed to flicker and waver as though the light that shone through them were an unsteady one.

At Hope's smile she dropped her spoon and her liveliness broke into an idiot grin. From lips like rose-petals there jarred a cackle of witless mirth.

"Oh, *Matushka!*" she giggled. "Look at the Englishman! He's smiling at me—he's smiling at me!"

"Hush!" The stolid mother put out a thick arm, took the girl by her thin shoulder and shook her gently. "Quiet, now! The Englishman will think you're a fool. Quiet!"

She rocked her to and fro for a few seconds, and the girl seemed to fall back to tranquillity under the movement. Her face settled again to its still, strange beauty—and she resumed her eating. The peasant woman let her arm fall; she turned to Hope and spoke for the first time since he had entered.

"We've got another daughter," she said.

Hope did not understand. "Ah, yes!" he answered vaguely. "Another daughter, have you?"

"Yes," said the woman, "we have. A clever one, too! Tell him, Pavel Ivan'itch; haven't we got a clever daughter?"

The mujik had finished his meal. He signified as much by leaning back on his bench and stretching himself voluptuously.

"Clever!" he said. "H'm!" His eye came round to Hope with a new arrogance; he had more to boast of than mere edible wealth. "*Uchitelnitsa!*" he said impressively. "She was a school-teacher. She had her certificates. That's what she was!"

"Had she really?" Hope, of course, showed the interest that was required of him. "That's splendid! But you said she *was* a teacher; isn't she one still?"

Husband and wife exchanged a swift look.

"Well—no!" said the mujik slowly. "When our revolution started she went to Moscow to work for the Soviet. She's there now."

Again that swift glance passed; Hope saw it, but could not guess its implication. He would have questioned further in pure amiability, but the mujik rose.

"*Nu!*" he said. "To business! Let us see what you've got."

"Yes," agreed Hope, "certainly; I will show you at once."

What he had to show was in a knotted handkerchief stowed inside his shirt. He

had to unbutton and dig in his bosom for it. The woman was clearing away the supper gear meanwhile; the idiot girl was rum aging in a far corner; the boy drew near, a thumb in his mouth, to watch.

"Now, this is a very wonderful thing," began Hope.

He laid the handkerchief upon the stool where he had been sitting and produced from it a gold watch, a big fob-distending packet of machinery which had come to Prince Orlovsky from his father. It *was* a wonderful thing, with the Orlovsky arms splendidly emblazoned upon the case and embroidered in faded silk upon the old-fashioned watch-lining between the inner and outer cases, and its large, frank face, with the slim, brown figures raised delicately upon it in gold, and the minute filigree ornamentation of its hands.

"You see?" said Godfrey Hope. "Gold, of course; and the workmanship—I tell you, there are kings who have not such a watch as that!"

He glanced up, full of assurance. The big mujik had his lips tight-closed upon a smile.

"I've got three of them," he answered. "I don't want any more. Yes!" he said, when Hope would have broke in. "Better ones than that! What else have you got?"

"Three of these!" gasped Hope. "But—you can't——"

"Huh!" The man laughed in a short, loud shout. He had the best of it this time and he was enjoying it. "I've had them crawling here at midnight and waiting in the road till I got up in the morning."

"But, wait!" begged Hope. "I've got a ring, too; a very valuable ring."

It was the great cabochon emerald of the old princess; ponderous, priceless! A pope might have worn it without dishonour to St. Peter.

But the mujik waved it away.

"You just see *my* rings!" he jeered. "*I'll* show you rings!"

He did—strewed forth upon the seat of a deal bench, from wrappings of sweat-stained rags and cheap little boxes such as pedlars used to sell in the streets to tourists and children. Rings and brooches, bracelets and necklaces; toys of the dressing-table and the desk; gems, gold and silver; the debris of lives which had been stamped into the blood-mud of the revolution!

"Eh?" The mujik ploughed through the mass with a great spade-ended finger. "I'm a rich man, Englishman! What do I want with your belfry watch? Do you think I need toys like that? Why, if I——"

He broke off abruptly and stared. Hope thought it was at himself. They were all around him. He looked vaguely from side to side to see what was the matter, when a hand caught him by the sleeve. Startled, he jerked around. The grave, lovely face of the idiot girl was at his shoulder, with its will-o'-the-wisp eyes.

She was tendering something to him with her other hand.

"For you!" she was saying. "For my Englishman!"

Hope was at a loss. She was trying to make him take something.

"Nice!" she crooned. "For you—nice!"

"Tanya!" The mother moved to take hold of her with a glare of defiance and challenge at Hope. The dirty urchin was sniggering. Then from the mujik came the spirit of an oath.

"Don't touch her! Don't touch her!" he cried to his wife. The woman came to a standstill. "She's taken a liking to him. Don't you see?"

He thrust the snuffling boy from his path and came swiftly forward.

"What has she got?" he said. "Never mind what it is! Take it, Englishman; she gives it to you. You mustn't refuse her! Take it; it's yours!"

"Er——" Hope hesitated. The lovely face of the idiot seemed to implore him gently; the brutal, iron muzzle of the big mujik besought him. Even in the dull and heavy countenance of the woman there was something that dared him not to comply. He found the gift pressed into his hand—a little oblong cardboard box, such as once one bought with its contents anywhere in Russia for twenty kopecks, which had grown now unfamiliar.

"Oh—I couldn't!" The phrase was merely automatic, part of a code of politeness. But it might have been a curse; for the girl began, as it were, to wilt under it; her soul reeled visibly under the blow. He hastened to make amends in a silly patter of words. "It's *too* good of you! I can't thank you enough. Why, I haven't seen any for ever so long. But—are you sure you can spare all these?"

It was the mujik who now touched his arm.

"Quick!" he said, "Take one; let

her see you! Quick—and you shall have some food to take away."

He bent and reached to the fire-door and drew forth in his iron fingers a piece of glowing wood. The idiot girl clapped her skeleton hands and her beautiful face was radiant and elfin with delight. Hope ran a thumbnail along the edge of the little box, took from it one of the twenty cigarettes it contained, and lighted it.

The girl squeaked with delight, and her mother took her. "My Englishman is smoking," she was chattering. "He smiled at me, and now he is smoking. Oh, *matushka*, isn't he pretty!"

The mujik laid back his fire-stick. "That's good, eh?" he said. Then in a lower voice: "You know—she's one of those that see things. She sees things that we can't see. We never thwart her. She's taken a fancy to you."

Hope was smiling. Facts were no longer true, and values had ceased to exist. The lunatic drama, which is Russia, had condensed itself into that single room.

It was nine o'clock in the evening when, at last, the door of the cottage closed behind him, shutting him out to the dreary inhospitality of the road. The sack which he had worn over his neck was now slung over his shoulder. The idiot girl had hovered round him to the last, gambolling on lean ankles and ungainly feet, and her favour abode with him while the mujik stocked his sack. The gold watch and the historic ring had nobly proved their worth. The first had fetched something like fifteen pounds of bread, a bucket-full of potatoes, and a slab of some whitish animal substance, the Russian name of which conveyed nothing to him, which was probably dripping. The ring—that was an heirloom, too; Captain Prince Orlovsky, of the Bodyguard, had given it to the princess, then a maid of honour, upon her betrothal—had also been valuable. It had fetched eleven eggs and the remains of a joint of beef.

The cold that had bitten at him on his way out from Moscow now entered his body and inhabited him like a strong-rooted disease; and the sack, the sack of life that he bore, burdened him to the limit of his strength. There were eleven good footsore miles to go—the whole eleven that he had already traversed. If the dawn saw him back at home, he would have done well; later than that the streets of the city were not safe for men who carried sacks.

9

JUST behind the splendours of the Tverskaya, and close to the buildings of the Old University, was the house that Rinaldescu, the great Rumanian millionaire, had built for himself. He had other houses scattered here and there about Europe; he moved from city to city ceaselessly, taking each in its brief yearly season of perfect bloom, and died soon after the armistice of ptomaine poisoning, contracted in a dining-car. It was a marble-fronted building upon the model of a Venetian palace, with a loggia of slender pillars fronting the street, a beautiful, arched doorway, and a paved courtyard in the middle. He had been a collector of stained glass, among many other things; the best of it was framed in the eight tall windows that fronted the street above the loggia. At night, when the great room within was lighted up, they shone forth to the filth and darkness of the crippled city with a ripe and tender glow, as though their mild and shining saints would signal: "This is the house of a Kommissar; walk wide of it!"

It was not yet dawn, but the grey forerunner of day was in the east and the lights in the windows were extinguished, when the sentry huddled in the loggia was aware of one who approached.

The man was behaving strangely. He seemed to have a large bundle of some kind, and suddenly he let it down upon the pavement, fell on his knees beside it, and bowed his head upon it. The sentry disengaged an ear from under his cap and became alert. The man was praying! Presently he saw him rise, struggle with his burden, and stagger forward with it; and all the time there came from him a rising and falling mutter of speech. The sentry had had a pious upbringing, but he recognized no word of any prayer that he knew. The man was abreast of him when down went the burden and its bearer with it, groaning his unceasing prayer.

"Hi!" called the sentry then. "What's all this?"

The other's head was resting on the sack. He did not raise it at the summons. He was still praying, with no word that was intelligible. The sentry hesitated, then stepped from the foot-high terrace of the loggia and shook the man smartly by the shoulders.

"Now, then!" he demanded. "What do you mean by it?"

The crouching man lifted his heavy head, and in the gloom his thin and beardless face showed white like a shine of water. And still he prayed.

"Long—long way—to—Tipp'rary!" he was saying, feebly.

The sentry released the limp shoulder. "*Inostranets!*" he said, with disgust. "A foreigner!" He gave the foreigner a Russian kick. "Stay there, you!"

His second or third shout fetched out the sergeant of the guard and a comrade with a lantern.

"A foreigner," explained the sentry. "Flops down and prays over that bundle; can't understand a word he says."

"Prays, eh?" The sergeant showed interest. "Better see what he's praying about. Open the bundle, one of you!"

When the sentry released him, Hope's head had fallen forward once more. His "praying" had ceased at last. Physically a weakling to begin with, miserably undernourished for a long period, he had stretched his endurance to the uttermost. He had covered the last miles in a delirium, hunted along from collapse to collapse only by an unflagging will. While the soldiers stood around and talked above him, he slept with his face flattened on the sack.

But when the sentry bent to pull the sack away, his hands were yet clenched upon it and hung on.

"Well," said the sergeant, "there's a vicious devil for you! No, don't bayonet him; we may want him."

Hope was asleep once more. They opened the sack, up-ended it, and spilled its contents forth upon the pavement. The lantern was lowered to illuminate them.

Like the jewels on the mujik's bench they lay heaped on the dirty pavement! The bread, the meat, the smashed eggs, and the rest, bought with the insignia of pride and honour and carried hither with what bitter labour!

The sergeant grimaced and scratched his chin. "H'm!" he reflected. "A food speculator! Better take three of those loaves and the meat—and the dripping, of course—to the guardroom. That'll be our share; the rest is evidence. Put the prisoner in the cell. Tickle his tail with the bayonet if he's inclined to be lazy."

Rinaldescu's Venetian palace had its Russian dungeon, a large, arched storeroom opening from the cloisters of the court. It was closed with massive double doors artistically studded with copper nails; over them a curved transom of ground glass gave a little light when there was any to give. Hope was widely enough awake when the wicket in the big doors was set ajar for him; he tumbled through it just not quickly enough to escape a final humorous prod from the long, three-edged bayonet that had awakened him. The wicket slammed behind him; the lantern was hung up in some place that let the dregs of its light leak through the transom; and he fell on his face on the stone floor, sobbing. Not weeping; just sobbing! For a while he could do nothing else.

¶

DIMITRI PAVLOVITCH BOTKIN had been a clerk in the Moscow showrooms of a German firm of automobile manufacturers which specialized in a 100-horse power Juggernaut for the gilded-youth market. Daily before his eyes they had lounged and postured. The exquisite young men of wealth or debts, with their English clothes and their piquant companions, their slang, and their manners. He himself was the son of a village schoolmaster who had done his poor best for him in the way of education; but his university was the showroom with the two great shining cars in the middle of the floor, his professors the spendthrifts and millionaires who walked round them, criticized them, and sometimes bought them. By 1914, when the army sucked him in and rolled him in the crudities of the Polish front, he needed only money to demonstrate himself as accomplished and showy a waster as the most eminent of the gilded ones.

In 1917 he had shot in cold blood the captain of his company with his own hand, and went into politics.

He was a tallish man of about thirty, long-limbed and herring-gutted, with a long face, womanishly smooth, sleek black hair, and a comic little smudge of black moustache. He had a well-selected repertoire of noticeable attitudes and an impressive languor of speech; the cant-word "comrade" in his mouth sounded like a witticism.

It was towards eleven o'clock in the morning when he came into the great room with the stained-glass windows, drooping at the shoulders, a hand sunk in a trousers

pocket, a cigarette gummed to his lip. People were there already awaiting him.

"Hallo, everybody!" he greeted them languidly. "Hope you're all feeling as rotten as I am. That you, Sashenka?"

The girl who sat in the narrow recess of one of the tall windows lifted her head so that her profile had its dull-glowing colours for a background. She wore furs, and boots that rose to the hem of her short skirt. She nodded to him carelessly.

Botkin let himself down in the chair behind the wide desk. His secretary, a fat, bald little man in spectacles, trotted to his side with papers.

The dandy Kommissar leaned back from the documents.

"My dear fellow," he said protestingly, "you're a very nice chap, but don't try me too far. Is there anything in all these papers that I really must see? Statistics? Damn the statistics! Personal memo? You can leave that. Report of proceedings—file it. Wireless news? Yes; I'll look at that. Anything else?"

"These communications must be acknowledged. But I can do that!"

"Of course you can, my dear old chap. That's what I keep you for. Off you trot and do it!"

The girl in the window recess looked up again. "Why don't you do some work sometimes?" she said. "You're only an ornament; little Postnik there is the real Kommissar. He does everything."

"Ye-es," drawled Botkin, and Postnik, the secretary, quaked as a sleepy eye rested on him, for the Kommissar had his Neronic moments. "But don't encourage him to think so. It wouldn't be good for him. You can go, Postnik!"

"Yes, excellency!" truckled Postnik, and vanished thankfully.

The sergeant and commander-in-chief of the Kommissar's army of twelve, strode across the parquet, big and soldierly.

"The prisoner, comrade," he announced.

Hope stood forward. There was an oval mirror on the wall behind the Kommissar, and his own face looked back at him, white through its dirt, with blue shadows in the hollows and unfamiliar strained lines. He knew what he had to encounter. Here was no justice, no law, not even the sober pursuit of any particular policy; only the freakish and vanity-eaten personality of the Kommissar. He made a courteous little bow.

"Godfrey Hope," he announced himself. "An Englishman."

"Ah!" It was a soft exclamation of interest from the girl. She hoisted herself so that she half-sat upon the corner of the desk, with one foot swinging and the other upon the ground. The little secretary, standing behind his master's shoulder, became alert behind his spectacles.

The Kommissar crossed his knees elegantly and prepared to make the use of his opportunities.

"Now, Mister Hope," said the Kommissar, "what are you, an Englishman, doing in Moscow?"

Hope shrugged and smiled faintly.

"Starving!" he answered.

He had intended nothing in the nature of a repartee, but the girl suddenly laughed.

"Really?" The Kommissar took his cigarette from his lips with a slow flourish, making a gesture of the movement. "But it would certainly seem that you know where to get supplies. There is enough in that sack for half a dozen people."

He waved to the sack.

Hope shook his head. "For three people," he replied. "Myself and two others—to last as long as possible. It would have saved their lives."

"Yes!" The Kommissar waved the cigarette again. "No doubt your intentions were excellent. But you must have been aware that this illicit traffic is strictly forbidden, and that by engaging in it you incurred a certain penalty?"

He watched his prisoner under lowered lids.

"Oh, yes!" answered Hope. "Oh, yes! I knew that, of course."

The girl smiled and, still smiling, turned and looked at the Kommissar.

"Ah! You did. Then I must ask you to tell me from whom you bought these provisions."

"From whom I bought them!" Hope's eyebrows rose in an expression of amused surprise. The Kommissar marked it; gentlemen in the showroom had looked at him like that sometimes, as though he and his vices and his virtues, his life or death, his pain or pleasure were dim, far-off trivial things. He reddened, and the avid beast within him raised its terrible head.

"Yes," he said shortly. "You heard me correctly. Who sold you this food?"

Hope's faint smile showed again. "Sorry," he said, "I can't say anything about that."

" You mean you refuse to answer willingly ? Because, Mister Hope "—he paused and released a mouthful of smoke—" because you will be obliged to answer, willingly or not."

Hope was silent, but the look which infuriated the Kommissar still lingered on his face.

" Come, Mister Hope ; your feelings and the names you call them by—honour, loyalty, and so forth—we can take for granted. But they are not things which can be allowed to stand in the way of our administration. You must see that. And since sooner or later you will answer—Oh, I assure you that you will answer !—stronger men than you have refused to answer, and yet——" He paused and shrugged. " They babbled like delirious women in the end," he said slowly.

Hope pursed his lips thoughtfully. The Kommissar and the girl were both watching him, the latter leaning forward, propped on a closed hand, with a look as of gay excitement. But though he seemed to ponder, he was actually not thinking at all. There was nothing to think about.

" You mean "—he began, and hesitated as at an indecent word—" you mean—torture." The Kommissar continued to gaze at him, all his sallow face charged with deadly meaning. But he answered nothing. " Yes," said Hope, " I heard torture was being used. But I didn't believe it."

Still they were silent. They knew, *they* knew how to let a man's own thoughts do their work for them.

He lifted his face and returned their stare.

" No ! " he said. " Sorry, but I can't tell you anything."

" Then," began the Kommissar slowly, while his full, red lips widened to a smile, " in that case——"

" *Chort !* " The girl's sharp oath interrupted him. She had swung round to look at him. " Don't be a damned fool, Botkin ! You've played and lost. And you know already where he got the grub. You're only play-acting ! "

The Kommissar's careful outwardness dissolved in mere human anger. " Look here, Sashenka——"

" Bosh ! " she snapped. " Don't try that on with me. You aren't big enough." The movement of her shoulder as she turned it on him was like the slamming of a door in his face.

" So you won't tell where you got it, Englishman ? Well, shall I tell *you ?* "

She wore a fur cap that hid her hair ; under the brim of it her small face, cream-pale, was impish and piquante, a girl-Puck, aflutter in the dark forest of the midwinter-night's fever-dream.

He turned to her with just the right little start of prompt attention and half-smile of pleased interest. He did these things as he breathed, automatically. Actually he was surveying her with what acuteness he could muster. There was something in her—he laboured to identify it and failed—which seemed familiar.

" Shall *I* tell *you*," she repeated, " where you bought all that muck ? "

" If you like," answered Hope. " But you mustn't ask me afterwards if you're right."

" Listen ! " said the girl. " A little thatched house, all by itself ! A big mujik with a beard, a nice fat wife, a little boy, and a queer daughter ! What do you say to that ? "

" Nothing," answered Hope, " except that it sounds very nice."

She laughed. " That is the place you would not betray. But we know all about that place. It has nothing to fear ; a very strong arm protects it. Look ! " she cried, clenched her fist and went through the motions of flexing her biceps and feeling the muscle. " If one straw of its thatch were harmed, I'd set fire to Moscow."

He recognized it then, the thing in her which he had sought to identify. It was her eyes of clear, pale blue and the dancing precarious light of them, like windows of a draughty room in which a fire leaps and sinks. Not fifteen hours ago he had seen such eyes in the face of the idiot girl. After all, it was not such a crashing coincidence, since she " worked for the Soviet " in Moscow. She was the *vchitelnitska*, the clever daughter ; she made safe the traffic of the house that stood alone—a pretty little bird of prey, a pet carrion-canary in the ghoulish aviary of the Kommissars, a figure of note in the dances and the " cellar-parties." Lucky, indeed, was the father of such a daughter, now that women were going so cheaply !

" Well ? " she demanded.

He smiled and shook his head. " No use asking me," he replied.

There was argument between the Kommissar and the secretary.

"I only call your attention to it, excellency," the latter was saying, sweating visibly. "It is a positive order and we acknowledged receipt of it. I should be blamed, excellency."

The Kommissar looked at him with a feral sidelong droop of the mouth.

"Yes," he answered. "You will!"

"B-but, excellency, it is not my fault." The secretary cast despairing eyes around him. "The young lady is witness that I begged your excellency——"

"Shut up!" interrupted Botkin savagely.

But the girl had heard. She turned sharply.

"I'm a witness all right," she said briskly. "What's he trying to do to you, Postnik? What's the game, Botkin?"

The Kommissar snarled. "You mind your own business if you've got any."

She gave him a look that calmed him as a splash of cold water calms an hysteric.

"Right!" she said. "I will. You're a rotten brute, Botkin, and you've lasted too long in this job. That's the business I'm going to mind to-day."

She slipped down from the desk, and, still looking at him, began to draw on her gauntlets.

"Don't be silly!" The Kommissar moved awkwardly in his chair. He knew the kind of thing she would do for him; he had seen it done to others. She had only to find or create the right moment and the right mood to speak, pungently and adroitly, the needful poisoned words—smile them, perhaps, across the rim of a champagne glass—to this bloated potentate or that; and the thing was done. The head of a Kommissar on a charger was cheap enough.

"Sit down again," he urged. "It's nothing really—simply something I ought to have known before which this fool springs on me at the last moment like this. Sit down, Sashenka."

She curled a scornful lip. "That's right—blame Postnik!"

"Damn Postnik!" cried the Kommissar.

It was an order from Lenin himself, signed with his own august hand, that all cases involving foreigners of certain specified nationalities were to be referred to the Kommissar for Foreign Affairs.

"Now, Mister Hope, listen to me." Hope sat up and obeyed. "I cannot tell you whether you are fortunate or otherwise in that your case is to be decided elsewhere. As a foreigner, you are remitted to the Kommission for Foreign Affairs. I can't, however, advise you to found hopes on that. Your crime is a serious one and is becoming much too common. You will, therefore, go to prison until your fate is decided."

Hope rose from his chair and bowed gravely.

"Meantime I have a request to make," he said.

The Kommissar frowned irritably. The prisoner's manner was impressing him, and he resented it.

"You are not in a position to make requests," he said shortly.

"But this is not an official matter," persisted Hope. "It's a personal thing, as between gentlemen. You can't possibly refuse it."

The girl made some queer little noise, between a word and a laugh. The Kommissar compressed his lips.

"Make your request, then," he said.

Hope bowed again, gravely as before.

"The people with whom I have been living were expecting me back before daylight. They will be in great fear and distress. They are very old and feeble, and I should be deeply grateful if you would cause them to be told what has happened to me."

"H'h!" The Kommissar slowly lit another cigarette and sat for some moments in thought. "Who are these people?" he asked.

"The Prince and Princess Orlovsky," replied Hope, and gave the address.

The Kommissar nodded and noted it on a pad.

"You lived with them?" Hope nodded. "In what capacity? *Sluga*, perhaps? A flunkey?"

Hope smiled pleasantly. "Something of the kind," he agreed. "I was a tutor in the family."

"A tutor!" repeated the Kommissar. A very royal contempt was in his tone. He had suspected the fellow of being a man of position, an aristocrat, one of those who lounge into showrooms to look at cars. As to tutors, he knew all about them; his father, one recalls, was a village schoolmaster.

But the girl repeated the word too. "*Uchitel!*" she cried. "A teacher—you too!" She clapped her hands and her laughter rang in the great room. "Oh, I must certainly ask the people who sold you the food about you. This is wonderful!"

The Kommissar waited grimly for her to finish.

"Well," he said to Hope, "the people you speak of shall be informed of your arrest. You have nothing else to say? Good! Sergeant—remove the prisoner."

"Good morning," said Hope politely, as the sergeant took him by the arm.

The Kommissar grunted. He had not the temper to play his own game to the end.

But the girl laughed once more.

"*Do svidania!*" she called. "Till we meet again!"

¶

THE prison to which Godfrey Hope was marched, a single armed man trudging at his heels to guard him, had been a German boarding-house. A tortuously-carved hat rack and an oleograph of a girl with flaxen pigtails still remained in the entrance, where a fat old man, in a mixture of workman's clothes and soldier's uniform, struggled, grunting, from a broken rocking chair to receive him into custody.

"*Anglichanin?*" he repeated, when the escort had gone through the forms of handing over his prisoner. "Is he rich?"

"Him!" The soldier sneered. "Look at him. I've been through every pocket he's got, and there wasn't a kopek."

There was a suite of rooms on the second floor, cut off from the rest of the house by a single door with numbers painted upon it. A short corridor was within, with windows opening on the street on one side and two small rooms on the other; at the farther end was a single large room.

"Go in," said the jailer who had brought him up the stairs, standing at the opened door.

He gave Hope a shove and thrust him into the short passage. The door slammed at his back—and its bolts and bars jangled into place.

Folk appeared in the doorways to look at him. From the large room at the end a tall man came towards him.

"A new prisoner?" he asked pleasantly.

He had a thin, shaven face, with the remains of deep weather-stain upon the high cheeks, and thick, grey hair. He was dressed in the worn uniform of an infantry officer, with the badges removed.

"Yes," said Hope. "I was arrested this morning."

The other nodded. "An Englishman, aren't you? I noticed your accent. Better come into this farthest room. They called rather a long list of us yesterday, and we've got more room than the others. Come along!"

Hope followed him. The large room extended through the front wing of the house and had windows both upon the street and the courtyard. There were perhaps twenty people in it, men and women both, lying on their bundles by the walls, or seated in groups.

"By the way, my name is Volkov," said the man who had greeted him. Hope spoke his own name, pronouncing it, according to the local convention, "Gope." For there is no "H" in Russian, and "G" does duty for it.

"Well," said the officer, "I'll postpone the introductions. You look awfully tired. When did you have a meal last?"

Hope shook his head. "Meals haven't come my way lately," he said. "I know I had nothing yesterday. The day before I had some bread. But I'm all right, really. I suppose they sometimes feed one here, don't they?"

Volkov took his arm. "Come and sit down," he said. "We needn't wait for the ration. God be thanked, our jailer is bribable."

He found Hope a seat on the floor against the wall and gave him a folded uniform greatcoat to sit on. A girl sitting a few feet away turned to the new-comer. Volkov spoke to her.

"Here's an Englishman for you, Elena! Look after him, will you, while I get him some food."

"An Englishman?" repeated the girl, and hitched nearer.

"Yes," said Volkov. "Just talk to him while I knock for *kipyatok* to make tea."

He moved away. Hope found the girl beside him, looking at him with an effect of piercing intentness. She had a thin, dead-white face, broad across the brows and running sharply to a point at her chin, and dense black hair cropped at the level of her ears. He knew her for what she was as surely as if she had been labelled; a part—that leaven of sore hearts and fretful moments, of strained capacity and fevered ideals, which had always forced a ferment in the heavy dough of Russia.

"Too tired to talk?" she asked.

"Oh, not at all," said Hope. "Only too pleased, of course."

She considered him. "Needn't trouble

to be polite," she said curtly. "Waste of time, here, when a list may be called at any moment. Who are you?"

He told her that he was an English tutor employed by the Orlovskys. She shook her head.

"In Russia a tutor may be little more than a servant," she remarked. "In England, perhaps, it's different. Are you a person about whose death the Government will make a fuss?"

"I don't know," he said doubtfully. "I have an uncle who is an important sort of person; my mother would try to work him up to something. But, you see, about a million better men than I have been killed in the war. What's one unfit Englishman among so many?"

The girl went on. "They come in every day with a list and read it out. Those whose names are called stand up and are taken away. We thought they'd arrived when the door was opened for you."

She fell silent, and Hope had nothing to say. Volkov returned presently. He brought with him steaming tea, a thick slice of bread and two withered apples, and laid them beside Hope.

"It's all I could manage to get for the moment," he said. "I had to hurry because it's about time for the list to be called. Still, it's better than nothing."

Hope flushed. "It's—it's more than I can thank you for," he said hesitatingly. "I oughtn't to let you——"

Volkov interrupted him. "You're not depriving anybody of anything," he assured him. "We have everything in common here. It's better stuff than the Soviet serves out because we buy it from the thieves who looted it."

He was drinking the last of the tea when Volkov on one side of him, and the girl on the other, suddenly lifted their heads. The other people in the room looked up at the same moment. The door was being opened with a jangle of fastenings.

"It's the list," Volkov told Hope. "It's good form here to take no notice unless your own name is called. Just look on calmly."

The feet of the messenger of death and his companions rang loud on the boards of the passage. The people in the room resumed their talk and their other occupations. All over the old and splendid city the same dire ceremony was being performed.

The officer in charge of the armed party strode into the room, burly, with fresh pink cheeks, point device with sword and uniform, and the red armlet of the Soviet. His troops were in the passage; a couple of them—one a khaki-clad Chinaman—stood in the door to watch the naming of the doomed.

"Pay attention!" barked the officer, just as if it were possible for those quiet people, for all their careful calm, to ignore him. "Those whose names are called will stand up and pass out to the passage."

He paused, produced a paper from the breast of his coat, and scanned it.

"Kazakov," he read.

A bearded young man in the uniform of a university student, rose at the end of the room and walked the length of it to the door. His face had gone corpse-white, but his gait was steady enough. As he passed, he nodded to the girl by Hope's side, and his face constricted in an attempt at a smile.

Two more names were called. One was that of a woman. She was tall, long in the face, sharp at the corners, not unlike the conventionalized boarding-house landlady of the comic papers. The burly officer with the list might have been the angel Ithuriel with his spear, he who unmasks and reveals the true form of whatsoever he touches. At the sound of her name she looked up and a tide of strong living colour suffused its sallowness; and suddenly she was beautiful. Like a queen to the pomp of her bridal she passed down the room; with her head high and her eyes shining she turned and went out at the door.

Hope had followed her with fascinated eyes. Pain he knew and had endured; courage, tenacity, patience he had experienced. But that rapt ecstasy of sacrifice was new to him; it thrilled him and somewhat daunted him. He turned to his neighbours with a whispered comment when the last name was read out.

"Volkov!"

The whisper died on his lips. The grey-haired man gave him a small grimace of a smile, deprecatory and humorous, and began to rise to his feet. Hope's jaw dropped; his mind staggered. He heard the other speak as from a distance.

"Elena will show you the ropes," said Volkov.

The burly officer put away his list, patted his belt to its precise position, and turned to go. Exits were not his strong point; he

called men out to die robustly enough; but he lumbered through the door with the back view of one who retires worsted from an encounter.

"Here!" said the girl Elena, sharply, to Hope. "Take a cigarette; it'll quiet you! I know how you feel."

Dumbly he took it. All round the room people were lighting cigarettes.

"I should like to stand by the death-bed of a Kommissar," she said. "One who died sober and was conscious to the last; I want to know what death means to a man like that. I want to be sure of what they really are."

"Aren't you sure?" asked Hope. "Isn't it clear what they are?"

"No!" she frowned. "It isn't clear. Bloodlust, you'd say; but when generals in the war were fattening the fields of Europe with dead bodies, one didn't speak of bloodlust. Volkov was a general. No; mere killing isn't the test. But is there, behind all the bloodshed and the horror, some real compelling inspiration? Oh, a wrong one, if you like—wrong, futile, crazy—what does that matter? Men can be sincere in their errors; one doesn't need to be right to be heroic."

"I'm afraid I can't help you," said Hope. "A man, for me, is wrong when he does wrong, just as a man is dirty when there is dirt on him. It's not a very subtle argument, I know; but the distinction between right and wrong has never seemed to me to be a subtle one."

"But it can be a subtle one," retorted the girl. "That is why judging and condemning others is so frightfully dangerous."

"Well," said Hope, in a momentary access of unusual acuteness, "isn't it as dangerous to acquit as to condemn?"

She liked that, and turned to him quickly.

"It depends upon whether——"

She broke off abruptly. The fastenings of the outer door were clanking again. Everybody was looking up. They heard the door open and the noise of footsteps on the bare boards. Once before a list had been called twice in the same day. But those who came along the passage had not the hasty and heavy tread of soldiers.

Two figures appeared in the doorway of the room; a tall, frail old man with a forked, white beard and a high, thin nose; and upon his arm the silvery ghost of an old lady. They came forward slowly and uncertainly.

"Two prisoners," murmured the girl.

But Hope sprang up with a cry and hastened to meet them. It was the Prince and Princess Orlovsky. Thus the Kommissar Botkin had carried out his promise to inform them.

He bent to kiss the princess's hand.

"Ah, my dear boy," the old prince was saying; "this is a great comfort, a great comfort. I do not know what we should do without our dear boy!"

¶

GODFREY HOPE never learned in full detail the manner of the arrest of the Orlovskys, with its little touches of Kommissar Botkin's distinctive style.

The girl Elena appeared swiftly beside Hope. "Let me!" she said, and her arm relieved that of the frail old prince with her young, nervous strength. "My place—help her over to it!"

Together they supported the old lady across the floor and eased her down till she lay upon a spread of coats and blankets, her head, beautiful yet with its coif of silver hair, pillowed upon a bundle.

The prince, at Hope's invitation, sat himself down in the angle of the floor and the wall and accepted a cigarette. In spite of his height and the forked flow of his white beard, his unconscious dignity of carriage

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and his age, there was a simplicity in him; a sincerity of manner and bearing, that made it possible for him thus to squat like a church-door beggar and yet be fine and reverend; even the dreadful attitude of crucifixion once failed to make a good man ridiculous. He seemed bent on excusing his wife's weakness.

"At her age," he said. "And so suddenly, too; I am sure you understand, my dear boy! Everything so sudden; even the great pleasure of seeing you again—I assure you, I feel the effects of the shock myself! But in every other respect, she has been wonderful—wonderful! I have been full of admiration. Her concern was all for you till those men arrived. Really, that young Kommissar is a very deplorable creature!"

The early evening filled the windows, and the night came upon its heels. Around the large room groups of prisoners lit candles; the little flames of them, scattered about the place, had the look of a nursery illumination, a suggestion of a Christian festivity. An evening meal of bread and tea was issued, and over it the voices weaved back and forth pleasantly. There was even a little laughter.

Hope crossed the room to where the princess lay. She was asleep. One hand was under her cheek, and upon her worn face, surrendered to rest, there dwelt, as it were, a fugitive recollection of girlishness and prettiness. He stooped, looking at it, and was aware of the girl Elena seated close by and making signs to him. He nodded and went to sit beside her.

"She'll be all right, now," said the girl.

"Yes," said Hope. "Better off than she's been for a long time. I didn't contrive things very well for them, I'm afraid, and there was nobody else to look after them."

Her thin face jerked round to look full at him.

"Don't," she said. "Don't talk like that. She's been telling us about you. 'Our dear boy,' she calls you. She says that she and the prince implored you, ordered you—all but knelt to you—to abandon them when you could have saved yourself. You wouldn't! *Why* wouldn't you?"

Hope moved uneasily. "Oh," he said awkwardly; "couldn't do that, you know!"

"No!" Her face came nearer to his, the heavy brows contracted, the big eyes afire. "Of course you couldn't. It wouldn't have been *you* that you saved—not *you*, the loyal, the brave, the strong—but some deserter, some coward, some traitor wearing your name."

"I say!" protested Hope, startled. "I can't let you think that I——"

Her short hair slashed to and fro over the nape of her neck to the vehement shake of her head.

"Oh, I know!" she interrupted. "But can't you see? You are—well, a nobody, just a very ordinary young man of your class. This thing that you have done comes naturally to you; you couldn't have done otherwise. That is so?"

Hope stared at her. He was not a hero and he knew it; but he was a gentleman and he knew that, too. Curious that the distinction was not as plain to her as it was to him.

The candles on the floor spilled their light abroad over the bare boards; the sparks of cigarettes showed as though floating above that pool of mild radiance, and faces were dim and grotesquely pitted with shadows. The girl had fallen silent beside him, savouring who knows what tormenting ferment of wild altruism and remorseless intellect. People were settling down for sleep here and there; the voices of the others fell low and infrequent; the room darkened as one candle after another was put out. Before Hope's eyes, brooding upon the gloom, ghosts began to walk. The woman of that morning who, when her name was called, had stood up transfigured and beautified, passed before him again, moving with that high carriage with which she had advanced upon her doom; he saw her raised face, tranquil and abrim with peace. Others came with her—General Volkov, still smiling, and yet others, men and women, whom he did not know.

"'Gentlemen unafraid!'" he quoted to himself, and was unaware that he had spoken audibly. But the girl had heard. He felt her shoulder press against his as she leaned to him.

"You see them, too?" she whispered, in a single gasp. "You see them, too?"

"Eh?" He was startled. He had seen, he knew, creations of his fancy; in other words, he had seen nothing. "See—what?"

Her thin shoulder pressed closer. "Them!" she answered, still whispering. "They were going through the room, scores of them; Volkov was among them.

You saw them? Oh, tell me if you saw them?"

The need to answer broke up his mood of vision. He felt the embarrassment of a boy caught writing verses. Men of his kind talk neither of their dreams nor their prayers. He would have liked to withdraw the shoulder against which she leaned.

"Tell me!" she persisted.

"There was nothing to see," he said protestingly. "I was just—thinking."

She murmured something inarticulate and continued to rest against him. She was silent for a space of seconds; then:

"I saw them, too!" she breathed.

"I tell you," said Hope, "there was nothing to see. You're letting your imagination run away with you. And, excuse me—my shoulder——"

He moved to disengage himself. But an arm, flung round behind him, caught and held him.

"Wait!" The low voice compelled him. "I want to tell you something—since you have seen them, too!" He stirred at this, but the clinging arm restrained him. "To-morrow morning they will call my name. I know it!"

"How do you know?"

Her head was close to him; her hair brushed his cheek.

"I don't know how I know it, but I know it. I know it certainly and surely; I think —*they*—told me. Listen to me! I am sure of it; and to-morrow night, when they pass through, I will be with them. You shall see me."

"But——"

The arm tightened again. "Are you afraid of me?" came the whisper. "Surely in all the world there is nobody you need be less afraid of than me—now! My arm? I can't drag you with me. You would lend your shoulder—wouldn't you?—to any woman who was going down a steep place! It is all I want, and you make me beg for it."

"Oh, I say!" Hope was shocked. "It—it isn't that, really. It's simply that I can't believe this—this presentiment of yours. You're—er—overwrought; that's what it is. And I only wanted——"

He paused, saving himself only just in time from blunt bathos.

"Ah!" she said. "You don't understand at all. You don't even believe that I know. You think I have a presentiment and that I am frightened. Don't you think that I am frightened?"

"Er——" Hope temporized. "Not frightened, of course. Just—er——"

"You do!" she interrupted him, fierceness thrilling through her whisper. "You *do* think I'm frightened, and all you do is to sneer at me!"

"Look here!" Hope sat upright with a jerk. "I swear I don't sneer at you. I never sneered at anybody in my life. And if you really believe in that—that presentiment of yours, I don't see why you shouldn't be frightened. I'm certain *I* should be. But it's only a presentiment, of course."

"Oh!" she shrugged. "Presentiment! I *can't* make you believe. And if I could—if I could—it would be no use. You wouldn't help me."

"I assure you, I'd do anything on earth," protested Hope.

"Would you—would you be gentle and comforting to a girl who never had and never needed gentleness and comfort? Would you let her know how it feels to be —to be folded close from fear and harm? To pass her burden to another and be passive and safe? Would you do that?"

"If I could," faltered Hope. "I'm awfully sorry, but I'm not much good at that sort of thing. Still, if I can help you at all——"

Her shoulder was against his again, and with it the full weight of her.

"Hold me, then!" she whispered. "Hold me in your arms."

She lay there, with her head on his breast, his arms about her, as he leaned back against the wall. Both were silent for a long space. When next she spoke he realized with a start of his consciousness that he had been dozing.

"Yes," she murmured; "this is what I wanted—just once! If I had really been frightened, this would have helped me."

"Eh? You weren't——"

"Don't move," she said. "Stay as you are. No; I've never been frightened of anything. I've never felt any of the proper things. Too late to feel them now—except this. Don't move!"

Her murmuring voice wandered on. The low breathed sing-song of it was a lullaby.

"Incomplete!" it said. "Half a mind and no soul; not even completely a woman. Can't hurt and can't help—time to finish with it—can't even hate or love completely —a neutral—an alien——"

It continued, down there on his bosom. His arms framed a confessional; his breast was a Gethsemane. And Hope, like others who could not watch the while of a passion, drooped his head in utter weariness and sank to sleep.

He did not wake even when he rolled over and she perforce raised her head from where it rested. He slept on while she put his folded coat under his head for a pillow and spread a mantle of her own over him. He never knew how she sat through the night, smoking cigarette after cigarette, turning at intervals to bend over him and look intently into his face, candid and self-revealing in the abandon of slumber.

¶

WHEN he awoke to the tarnished prison daylight she was not beside him. He sat up, swallowing a groan at the pains of his stiffened muscles, and saw that without the windows at each end of the room snow was falling in great leisurely flakes, looking black against the sky. To his left, the princess still slept, and across the room the prince had not roused yet. Many of the other prisoners were also asleep, but a few had procured tea and were gathered in groups to drink it.

While he sat, gathering energy to get up, the girl appeared from the corridor and came towards him. She had a glass of tea in each hand, paper-wrapped for the protection of her fingers, and clamped between her elbow and her side was a slab of bread. She walked slowly, that she might not spill the tea; he had time to remark her boyish slimness and a certain careless grace in her gait.

"I was going to wake you," she said. "Catch hold of this glass, will you? I knew you'd want to be up when the prince wakes."

"You shouldn't have troubled to fetch this," said Hope.

"No trouble!" She sat down. "When you want to get anything here, you go and knock on the door. The sentry'll open the peep-hole and call that old thief of a door-keeper. Order what you want, and when he says he hasn't got any—he always says that—you swear at him."

"Thanks," said Hope, sipping at his tea. He knew she was looking at him, and he was unwilling to return her gaze. "I'll remember that—especially the swearing."

"Do," she said. "It's important! And talking of remembering——" (she paused, hesitated as though in thought) "do you remember last night?"

He felt that he was reddening furiously. "No," he answered. "I don't remember anything you don't want me to. Not a thing!"

She smiled. "You were wonderfully good to me," she said. "You understand now, don't you?"

His reply made it very clear that he had understood nothing at all.

"Quite!" he answered. "Jolly glad I was able to help you, you know. Beastly things, those presentiments! My mother has them, and, though nothing ever happens, they often worry her a lot. And my old nurse claimed to have 'second-sight.' Awful lies she used to tell."

"But——" She stared in frank amaze. "Presentiments! Again! My poor *boy*, *that* wasn't a presentiment! That was—that is—just cast-iron truth. And all the time you were thinking—oh, what a shame! You did all that for me and never knew what you were doing. I'm ever so sorry."

"I suppose I'm a fool," said Hope resignedly. With broad daylight for his ally he wasn't going to be trapped into glamorous and crepuscular moods. "The day before yesterday I met a village idiot, and she found her affinity in me at once. And it's perfectly true that I only understand one word in three of all you say."

"All right," she said. "I won't say anything more about it till you know."

Her nod pointed her words.

"I don't know!" retorted Hope. "It's all so—so blooming silly."

"Isn't it?" she agreed. "But we're a silly people and this is a silly country."

Elena's instructions how to obtain food proved sound. Others had been before him on the same business and the door to the landing stood ajar. The sentry lounged against the balustrade, smoking, and the fat old man from the doorway below, wearing a Cossack caftan with a rope round his equator and looking like a monk run to seed, raised a lamentable outcry at Hope's demands.

"Tea, you say! Plenty of tea! And bread! And everything else there is! Oh, Redeemer, he thinks I keep a restaurant!"

"Hurry, now!" commanded Hope.

Elena had told him to swear; he swore.

"You old ——!" The first epithet was a word of power. In the full spate of his denunciation the bloated old jail-flunkey

jarred to staggered silence. "You God-forgotten —— of a ——!"

From behind Hope's shoulder sounded a choked giggle, and he turned to find the dark, thin face of Elena.

"You are an artist," she said. "It was wonderful. Fancy *you*, of all people!"

"I had no idea you were within hearing," said Hope. "I'm awfully sorry."

She made a small grimace. "You'd say that if I happened to catch you undressed. Only God and your wife may know you when you're unbuttoned. You've got buttons on your soul."

"Oh, have I?"

"Yes," she jeered. "Pretty little pearly buttons all up and down in rows, and pink ribbons tied in bows, and lace round the edges! Well," and she nodded her sharp significant nod to him; "take care; I'll tear all those buttons open for you this morning."

The princess, too, was the better for her repose, for the time being, at any rate. She sat against the wall amid the coats and coverlets, and contrived to have the effect of a gentle hostess, abolishing with her presence and the infection of her delicacy and amiability all that was frantic and fantastic in that bivouac on the steps of the scaffold.

She was talking yet when there sounded the heart-catching alarm that was the apex of the prison door—the clatter of the door being opened. They had not noticed among themselves how talk in the room had died down as one after the other fell silent in an expectancy of nervous strain. The loud-booted feet of the officer and his mamelukes rang on the boards of the corridor; faces, ashen, with mouths that twitched uncontrollably, or quelled to a stony calm, lifted to the doorway.

"The list, I suppose?" asked the prince.

The girl nodded. She was seated at the feet of the princess, who had Hope on the other side. She bent forward now to catch his eye; her own was alight with a queer, humorous malice. She had the look of one who prepares a taunt for a friend's discomfiture, the "what-did-I-tell-you?" look. And suddenly Hope, who could find no overmastering thrill in the possibility that he might hear his own name called out—the days that were passed had dulled and familiarized his capacity for fear as pain will dull an overworked nerve—felt a sickness take possession of him.

He struggled with his weakness. His normal consciousness railed at him. *She* had done this to him with her twilight murmurings, her ghosts, and her presentiments. She had found an unexpected breach in his matter-of-fact armour and stabbed him through it. Just let her wait till this ghastly business was over!

The stout officer produced from the bosom of his uniform overcoat the folded paper of names.

Then he spoke a name.

"Maximova!"

A great gust of breaths released sounded in the room, and eyes travelled about it to mark the owner of the name. There was a fraction of an instant during which none responded. Then, unhurried, with no outward perturbation, Elena rose to her feet.

She seemed taller than ever to Hope, sitting on the floor and looking up at her. He had never heard her *familia*, her surname, before, and when it was called he had known a warmth of relief. Now he could only stare, with hanging jaw and a voiceless agony numbing his faculties, as she stood. It all passed in a second or two; there was no indecorous delay; yet for him each movement of hers was a separate event, occupying its own isolated compartment of time, cut off from that which went before and that which followed. He saw her bend her gaze, full of meaning, of many meanings that later he laboured to decipher, upon him where he crouched; he marked the slowly widening curve of her lips. They were like unrelated happenings set far apart in a grotesque history. Then she bent towards him, swaying down as though to kneel upon one knee and her hand was on his shoulder. Her face came close, vivid as a thing seen by lightning. She spoke; her low words crept in upon his sense.

"Remember!" said the whisper. "I shall be there. To-night! Remember!"

Her face came closer still. It touched his. Soft cool lips pressed themselves upon his nerveless mouth for a long instant; and then she was upright again. She turned and walked towards the door.

"No—no!" He thought he was shouting it furiously; he tore at himself to rise and go after her. Only the princess heard that cry and saw the vain surge of inhibited muscles. She put out a gentle hand and laid it on his arm, and at her touch he collapsed and leaned sideways against her knee. At the door, a tall ragamuffin of a soldier put out an arm and drew the girl into the corridor.

When it was time for the midday meal, Hope rose, fetched the rations, and went through the motions of service to his companions. Elena's name was not spoken. They knew, all three of them, that ere they broke bread she had been freed of her shackles for ever and the tempestuous mind lulled to an unending calm.

Did she come as she had promised, when the candles were being put out and the voices sank, when night filled the windows and the sills were swelling cushions of snow? He sat by himself, unmoving through the hours, eyes looking unwinkingly before him. No dreams, now; no hospitality of the drowsy mind for shapes fashioned out of shadows and memories! Her presence was all about him; the shape of her lips was moulded upon his. She had indeed ripped the buttons off his tight-laced soul.

¶

IT still snowed that morning; winter had arrived in state. Of two new prisoners who arrived, both starving students, one had a frostbitten foot following a night in Kommissar Botkin's cold-storage chamber, and could only sit rocking himself to and fro and moaning with the agony of the returned blood. The other reported that Red soldiers had made a house-to-house perquisition for emergency snow-shovellers, and that men, women and children were labouring in the chief streets under armed overseers. The new ballet at the once Imperial Opera House was said to be a revelation of consummate art. An attempt to assassinate Trotsky had failed.

The bearer of tidings had a glass of tea in his hand, and sipped from it between items of information.

"Oh, yes," he said; "the world is very lively just now. Nuisance being stuck in here just at this moment! Shan't be here long though; Botkin told me himself—Botkin the Kommissar, you know—he said to me: 'It's only for a day or two,' he said. 'You'll be quite comfortable there. You'll be sorry when your time comes to leave!'"

The tramp of feet, the thud of rifles grounded on the boards of the passage, and the entry of the officer silenced him. He remained, gaping apprehensively, while the usual lunatic ritual achieved itself.

The paper rustled in the thick fingers. The officer stared at it and seemed for a moment to hesitate. He looked at it more closely, then, tentatively read aloud:

"Gope!"

"Huh!" Hope snorted. "Didn't know how to pronounce it, the fool!"

He heaved up, took the princess's hand and kissed it. The prince gripped his other hand.

"One of those others will take care of you," he said, nodded and walked to the door.

They shoved him out upon the landing. The stairs above and those below had their knots of onlookers, for parts of the house still harboured civilian occupants, and he was aware of their eyes, rising over him in tiers, alight with a fearful and excited pleasure.

The others whose names had been called joined them one by one, till five of them stood there, ringed in by their gruesome guards. There were no women this morning. The officer came forth last.

"Take 'em down, comrades!" he commanded.

The armed men shuffled to their work. A Chinaman took Hope by one arm; a weazened creature with an impishly portentous manner of face such as one sees sometimes in hunchbacks, fastened on to the other. Snow fell yet in the street, and the chill of the air flowed in to meet them.

There was a closed van backed to the kerb with two miserable frameworks of horses hitched to it. Its doors were open, showing its empty interior and the mud upon its floors.

"Well," cried the officer, "what are we waiting for? In with them!"

He himself was busy with that everlasting glove of his, stroking each finger of it separately into place. He stood with feet wide apart as he did so, looking on while the first three of the dead-cart's load were shoved aboard. Then something occurred to him.

"Hold on a minute!" he called. "Where's that comrade from the Kommissar's headquarters?"

A young soldier, completely uniformed from cap to boots, had been standing by the van looking on. He came forward now.

"I was forgetting you," said the officer. "Let me see now—the *Anglichanin!* Which of you swine is Gope?"

Hope answered: "Me, comrade!"

"Eh?" The officer needed room for his wits to turn in ere he saw the point of the

retort. The dwarfish creature who held Hope by the left arm cackled with laughter.

"Call me 'comrade,' you damned bourgeois?"

The back-handed blow in the face knocked Hope backwards, so that, but for his held arms, he would have fallen. The two guards hoisted him up for the remainder of an inhuman thrashing when the young soldier intervened.

"My orders were," he remarked, "that the Kommissar particularly wanted him all in one piece."

He spoke in the voice of an educated man; his face was that of a man of breeding. He looked at the officer coolly.

"Damn the Kommissar!" blustered the other.

"Right; I'll give him your message," said the soldier indifferently. He lifted his rifle, turned and began to walk away.

"Here, curse you!" called the officer uneasily. "Wait a second, can't you?"

He strode after the soldier and the two stood for some minutes in talk under the snow. Meanwhile, the dead-cart waited with its shuddering load, and the executioners stamped their feet and swore.

The officer and the soldier came back together. "Let him go!" commanded the former. "The Kommissar wants to keep him as a pet, it seems. Lot of blasted, silly nonsense! Get ready to start that van, there!"

The final victim was thrust in and the doors shut. The poor wrecks of horses were bludgeoned into activity; the armed men slouched beside the conveyance, and the whole arrangement departed, dragging its way along the snow-muffled street like the nightmare of a funeral. Hope was left alone with the soldier.

"Come on," said the latter. "Let's be moving!"

¶

THE Venus Anadyomene, naked in marble, beamed with sightless eyes over Hope's head as he ascended the splendid sweep of Rinaldescu's staircase. The great double doors of the room with the coloured windows let him in to the intimate glories of Kommissar Botkin; and the Kommissar himself, in a velvet dressing-jacket, was there to receive him. This time, though, his chair at the desk was occupied by a girl whom Hope had seen before in that room. Sashenka—he remembered her name with an effort. The Kommissar sat on a corner of the big desk in talk with her; he hitched round as Hope entered.

"Ah!" he cried; "it is Mister Hope! How are you, Mister Hope?"

Hope halted some paces from the desk; and once more the gilt-framed mirror behind the big chair showed him his own face, gaunt, strained, stained with blood from his nose, and discoloured on one cheek where the officer had struck him.

The girl in the big chair stared at him.

"What have they been doing to him?" she asked. "You fool, you've had him knocked about till she won't know him."

"My dear Sasha, you heard my orders." The Kommissar turned to the soldier, who stood at the door, with a curt question.

"None of my doing," answered the soldier. He related briefly the facts of Hope's encounter with the officer.

"You can go," said Botkin briefly. "You see, my dear, it's an accident. She'll know him all right. But we can wash him, if you like; a bucket and a scrubbing-brush will make him as good as new. Shall we?"

The girl uttered a snap of sound that resembled—and probably was—an oath, and continued to stare at Hope.

"Let him alone," said the girl. "You've done quite enough to him."

Botkin smiled easily and rolled his body round so that he leaned upon one elbow before her. With a smoke-stained forefinger he tapped her soft cheek.

"I've done what I agreed to do, Sasha," he said. "You wanted him and you've got him. There he is for you!"

The girl did not withdraw from his caress. Her face, pretty and sullen, seemed to brood discontentedly.

"Well," she said at last, doubtfully, "I'll fetch her. But if she doesn't know him, Botkin——"

She had risen while she spoke and now stood scowling.

"Of course she'll know him!" laughed the Kommissar. "Bring her in and see for yourself!"

The girl walked to the door without replying and went out from the room. The Kommissar heaved himself from the desk and straddled, hands deep in trouser-pockets, in a *dégagé* attitude beside it.

"Sit down, Mister Hope; sit down!" he urged. "No need for a lot of damned formality this time! How did you find your friends, the Orlovskys?"

There were chairs handy and the cushioned seats in each window recess, but Hope remained standing where he was.

"Whom has that girl gone to fetch?" he demanded.

While he listened to them speaking, wild thoughts had surged in his brain of Elena, miraculously spared like himself; but upon the heels of them had come the dull assurance of their futility. As she had known that her name would be called, eavesdropping, as it were, upon destiny, so now, there descended upon him the sure knowledge that she would never again answer to a call.

"Who is it?" he repeated. "What have you brought me here for?"

"You'll see," answered the Kommissar. He grinned suddenly. "It would seem that you are a lady-killer, Mister Hope. Once they have seen you they can't forget you."

"You're up to one of your foul tricks," Hope said. "D'you think I don't know it? Some piece of dirty work behind the backs of your masters!"

The Kommissar's roguish eye hardened and his posture became less debonair.

"You'll find it profitable to use a little more civility," he said stiffly.

"Oh, go to hell!" snapped Hope. "D'you think I care? What the devil do you——"

He broke off at the opening of the door. Botkin shrugged contemptuously and turned towards those who entered. Hope answered the shrug with a snort of defiance, turning to look likewise. It was the girl he knew as Sasha, or Sashenka, standing between the parted leaves of the door like a showman, ushering in another person to the room and the spectacle of its contents.

"See; there he is," she was saying.

The newcomer wore a huge wrap of furs that muffled her from the face to the very feet, a royal-looking garment upon which the tinted lights of the windows shifted as she moved as upon a surface of shining metal. It was too big for the figure it clad, making it a mere perambulating bundle.

It bore down upon him, seeming to advance hesitatingly.

"Well?" demanded Sashenka. "Isn't that he?"

For answer, there was a bubbling among the furs that clarified to an unmistakable giggle. Strange eyes wherein the light moved like a staggering flame and a face of blank, unmeaning beauty came to sight.

"O-oh, sister, it is my Englishman; the Englishman that smiled at me! Look at him, sister. Isn't he pretty?"

Hope gasped. He felt as drowning men are said to feel, with his whole past life reeling off before him. This was the idiot girl from the house that stood alone.

"She knows him, you see," the Kommissar said to the other girl. "I told you it would be all right."

Sashenka had come to her sister's side.

"I told you he was quite well and safe," she said. "And there he is, you see."

She looked across at Hope. "She's been dreaming about you—or something. They haven't been able to do anything with her. You'd better speak to her."

Hope jerked forth a bitter spit of laughter.

"I see," he said. "In my country there was an old superstition about the healing power of a dead man's touch. Here, though, you don't wait till the man's properly dead. You body-snatch him while he's living."

"Hush! Hush!" Sashenka got quickly in front of her sister. "Damn you, don't let her see you looking like that! Do you want her to have a fit? Tell him, Botkin, you fool!"

She led the idiot towards one of the alcoves. Botkin came over to Hope.

"You don't know when you're in luck," said the Kommissar. "That lunatic's people have got a notion that there's something supernatural about her, that she sees visions and all that. She's had nightmare about you—dreamed of you with a hole in your head and soldiers throwing you into a trench. Went from one fit into another!"

"Well?" demanded Hope. "What if she did? What's it got to do with me?"

"To do with you?" The Kommissar stared, forgetting his man-about-town manner for the moment. "But, of course, you don't know that the Kommission for Foreign Affairs has thrown you overboard—remitted you back to me to deal with! Well, it has; and it rests with me whether you leave here on your feet or in the dead-cart. That's how much it has to do with you, *durak!*"

"Oh, Lord!" Hope cried out in bored impatience. "What's it all about? Where does the other idiot come into all this?"

"I'm telling you, you uncivil brute," protested the Kommissar. "Why don't you listen? They're convinced that if I send you where I ought to—and that's out to the pits—they're convinced that she'll know.

She'll see it in dreams. So Sashenka, her sister there, who actually believes all this rot herself, wants me to let you go."

"Where?" put in Hope curtly.

"Where?" repeated the Kommissar. "Why, back to your own country. There's a party leaving at midnight for the Finnish frontier. What's the matter with the man? Don't you *want* to go?"

For Hope's white, bruised face seemed to have turned to stone. The antic devil, the Kommissar, had taken him up to a high place and showed him all the kingdoms and the cities of the world of his desire. His mother's house, with its square-walled garden at Hampstead, high above London, where from the window of the bedroom that had been his since childhood, he could look out over smoke-softened miles of city, with the spires and the factory chimneys rising from them like masts of ships in harbour; the heath and its sophisticated dales and hillocks; the order, the security and comfort, the propriety and graciousness of it all! All his for the taking—his, at the whim of an idiot.

"Well?" said the Kommissar. "Why don't you answer?"

Hope returned blinking to the present.

"There's one thing," he said. "What about the Orlovskys? You wouldn't have arrested them but for me."

"Never mind them," said the Kommissar. "You can't take them with you."

"Well," said Hope, "you can release them, anyhow, and I'll stay and look after them. Or I'll go back to that jail."

"You're likely to go somewhere that you won't like, if you keep this up," threatened the Kommissar. "Don't you understand? I'm telling you that I'll send you home."

"Ye-es!" Hope pondered for some seconds. "Yes, I know you are. Why?"

"Eh?"

"Why? You're not doing a thing like that for nothing. You're getting something out of it. I heard you talking when I came here; you've made a bargain about me with that girl. I want to know what it is?"

The Kommissar lowered a furious face to his.

"You mind your own business, curse you! I'll have you shoved on board that train in irons."

"Not you!" jeered Hope. "That couldn't be kept quiet—a foreigner refusing to be released from your beastly country! You'd have to answer for embezzling a Soviet prisoner for your private ends, and you know you daren't face it."

"Blast you!" fumed the Kommissar, and jerked away from him. "Sasha!" he called.

The girl rose and came down the room. The fur-swaddled lunatic followed her slowly, making little grimaces of coyness at Hope.

"Here's a thing for you!" the Kommissar broke out. "He won't go!"

"Won't go?"

The girl stared at Hope incredulously.

"No! Wants to stay here and be dry-nurse to those old Orlovskys. He'd be snapped up again in an hour, and I'd be asked about it. Can't have that, you know!"

She puckered her delicate brows in wonder.

"But—*why* won't you go?"

"Rather go back to jail," Hope answered shortly. "Those old people need me. It's a question of honour; you wouldn't understand!"

The sting missed her. She walked slowly over to him. Her exquisite little face was serious, with a suggestion of puzzled hurt, as though refusals were new to her.

"It's the child," she said; "it's Tanya! She's queer, you know; and when things go wrong with her, it brings bad luck. Oh, it's true; we've proved it! I've promised her you shall go home free to your own country, and if you don't, she'll know! She'll dream and then she'll have fits. You won't disappoint her, will you?"

"Afraid I must!" The voice and the words were those of the old Hope, the diffidently courteous, the sweetly formal; but their effect was a sneering repulse.

She flinched from it, but with a vicious tightening of the lips.

"Because of those Orlovskys?" she cried.

"Yes," he replied. "Because of those Orlovskys!"

She gave him a long look; he could all but see her rat's brain working, groping for an expedient by which to thwart him. Then she turned away and drew the Kommissar to the corner of the big desk.

¶

THE Kommissar returned to the room alone, closing the door behind him. He went and sat down at his desk. He was biting on a smile; he wore the look of a man who keeps his countenance with difficulty while a practical joke works up to its

climax. For a further evil portent, he had recovered his geniality.

"A cigarette, Mister Hope?"

"No!" said Hope.

The Kommissar raised his eyebrows in deprecation of this grossness and lit a cigarette for himself. A little desk-clock ticked faintly and rapidly, and the idiot fidgeted; save for these, the great room was still.

Something touched Hope's knee and he looked down with a start. The idiot had crawled close to him and was reaching up a hand towards his. She had something in it and was trying to give it to him.

"For my Englishman!" she crooned. "For my pretty Englishman!"

The Kommissar bent forward. "Take it, man," he urged. "Take it quick! Don't let's have any of her fits here."

She had fumbled it into his hand and now scuttled away along the wall on hands and knees, squeaking with excitement. Hope opened his hand and looked at the gift. He shook his head and smiled.

"He's laughing! My Englishman is laughing!" crowed the idiot.

She had given him Prince Orlovsky's great gold watch.

Then silence again till at length there sounded the patter of brisk, light feet on the stairs and the double doors parted their lips to admit Sashenka. Glowing with the fresh air, with snowflakes in her hair and a will-o'-the-wisp flame in her eyes, she went with a step that was half a dance to the Kommissar at the big desk, flinging Hope a grimace as she passed. Daintily enough to dance for the prize of a saint's head on a charger, a morsel worth its price to any gallant Kommissar, she came into that factory of wrong and oppression, smiled to the man-eating mountebank who ruled there, like a figure out of a poet's ecstatic dream—a poet diseased and pervert, but a poet!

She had a paper in her glove; she plucked it out and cast it on the desk before the Kommissar.

"It's done?" he smiled, taking it.

"Of course it's done!" she answered in a voice that trilled.

He was looking at the paper. "But you must sign this, Sasha!"

"Where? Here? Give me a pen."

The Kommissar took the paper from her and dried it on his blotting-pad with a smack of his fist. He rose, holding it.

"Now, Mister Hope," he said, "you have given trouble enough. Postnik, my secretary, will tell you about the pass, the ticket, and so forth; and to-night you leave us. Yes, I assure you; to-night you leave us—one way or the other—homeward or heavenward! And before you decide in which direction you will travel, you had better cast your eye over this document."

He came round the desk as he spoke and gave the paper to Hope. Then he returned to his place and put a finger on a bell-push. Hope glanced at the document, started violently, and began to read it feverishly.

It was a printed form with spaces filled in with a pen.

"To—so and so," it read. "You are directed to proceed at once with the execution by"—there followed the written word —"shooting"—"of"—and then, in the ample space left, the names, clearly set down —"Vladimir Alexandrovitch Orlovsky and Ekaterina Vasilievna Orlovsky, and to certify to me that this order has been carried out." Then the impression of the official rubber stamp and the Kommissar's signature. And below appeared another line of print: "I certify that the above order has been duly carried out."

The ink was still fresh where the girl had signed her name at the bottom. When he looked up, she was laughing at him; the Kommissar's arm was round her waist.

"You see," said Botkin, "all your objections are removed. *Bon voyage*, Mister Hope!"

The secretary was waiting in the door for him to come forth. With hands that groped, like a man blinded, he staggered towards him.

* * * * *

Two o'clock in the morning, and the "midnight" train for Petrograd was just pulling clear of Moscow. The land stretched in silver to either side of the line, shining under a frigid moon. Packed into his compartment, Hope stared through a broken window-pane upon that vastness of desolation. Holy Russia, whose harvests fatten on the blood of martyrs!

For Godfrey Hope there limned itself a vision, born of a heart made wise in torment. It shaped itself till it stood great and clear upon the snow-floor of the empty world—a virgin, slim and young, with the face that for ever should be vivid to him, weak, brave, and of enduring patience, folding in compassionate arms an idiot child.

Lying in the Grass

(To Thomas Hardy)

By Edmund Gosse

BETWEEN two russet tufts of summer grass,
I watch the world through hot air as through glass,
And by my face sweet lights and colours pass.

Before me, dark against the fading sky,
I watch three mowers mowing, as I lie;
With brawny arms they sweep in harmony.

Brown English faces by the sun burnt red,
Rich glowing colour on bare throat and head,
My heart would leap to watch them, were I dead!

And in my strong young living as I lie,
I seem to move with them in harmony. . . .
A fourth is mowing, and that fourth am I.

The music of the scythes that glide and leap,
The young men whistling as their great arms sweep,
And all the perfume and sweet sense of sleep,

The weary butterflies that droop their wings,
The dreamy nightingale that hardly sings,
And all the lassitude of happy things,

Is mingling with the warm and pulsing blood
That gushes through my veins a languid flood,
And feeds my spirit as the sap a bud.

Behind the mowers, on the amber air,
A dark-green beech-wood rises, still and fair,
A white path winding up it like a stair.

And see that girl, with pitcher on her head,
And clean white apron on her gown of red,—
Her even-song of love is but half-said:

She waits the youngest mower. Now he goes;
Her cheeks are redder than a wild blush-rose:
They climb up where the deepest shadows close

But though they pass and vanish, I am there;
I watch his rough hands meet beneath her hair,
Their broken speech sounds sweet to me like prayer.

Ah! now the rosy children come to play,
And romp and struggle with the new-mown hay;
Their clear high voices sound from far away.

They know so little why the world is sad,
They dig themselves warm graves and yet are glad;
Their muffled screams and laughter make me mad!

I long to go and play among them there;
Unseen, like wind, to take them by the hair,
And gently make their rosy cheeks more fair.

The happy children! full of frank surprise,
And sudden whims and innocent ecstasies;
What godhead sparkles from their liquid eyes!

No wonder round those urns of mingled clays
That Tuscan potters fashioned in old days,
And coloured like the torrid earth ablaze,

We find the little gods and loves portrayed,
Through ancient forests wandering undismayed,
Or gathered, whispering, in some pleasant glade.

They knew, as I do now, what keen delight
A strong man feels to watch the tender flight
Of little children playing in his sight.

I do not hunger for a well-stored mind,
I only wish to live my life and find
My heart in unison with all mankind.

My life is like a single dewy star
That trembles on the horizon's primrose-bar, . . .
A microcosm where all things living are.

And if among the noiseless grasses, Death
Should come behind and take away my breath,
I should not rise as one who sorroweth;

For I should pass, but all the world would be
Full of desire and young delight and glee;
And why should men be sad through loss of me?

The light is dying; in the silver blue
The young moon shines from her bright window through
The mowers all are gone, and I go too.

The Ship's Rat

Opportunity, and a double atonement

By I. A. R. WYLIE

THE neat little *paquebot*, *La Belle France*, had signalled her farewell to Aden, and the passengers loitering on deck cast a last glance at the distant land which they were not to see again for many days, and descended reluctantly to the stuffy region known as the *salle à manger*. *La Belle France* had but small accommodation to offer, and the passengers in question were few and of that mixed quality which, for pecuniary or other reasons, avoid the magnificence and publicity of the usual ocean liners. From the narrow-chested, hollow-eyed little doctor who was trying the journey for his health, to the man with the haggard, embittered face who called himself Hume and wore evening dress as out of submission to an unconquerable habit, they were all "stray dogs"—men obviously not Fortune's favourites, and each bearing about him the mark of tragedy or failure—or perhaps worse.

In all, there were ten of them seated at the long table. Two places at the captain's right and left were unoccupied, and instinctively all ten glanced at the vacancies, and from thence to the captain, with the same unspoken question. The tubby little Frenchman laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"*Les dames sont toujours en retard*," he said despairingly. "*Nous attendrons, messieurs.*"

Even as he spoke, the door of the dining saloon swung open and a gay "*Bon soir, mon capitaine!*" brought him to his feet with a courteous bow.

"We did fear zat ze rough ocean be too much for ze ladies," he said. "We are glad zat our sunshine has rise so glorious as ever!"

She stood still a moment, laughing at him and at them all with a radiancy which seemed to challenge the general gloom; and, indeed, the faces turned involuntarily to greet her, relaxed and lowered their various masks of worry or morose reticence. She was, as the captain had expressed it in high-flown, if not in exact, metaphor, a ray of sunshine which had strayed unexpected into their midst, and they were grateful to her because she found it worth while to dress with Parisian elegance for their most un-Parisian meal. They were grateful for her very beauty; but, above all, for the cheery *bon camaraderie* which she displayed to each. Perhaps they were stricken with the sense of their own unworthiness. They knew that she was Mrs. Hadley, a rich young widow, travelling with her trained nurse for the sake of society-worn nerves, and they knew, even if they did not acknowledge it, that they were just "stray dogs" whom Society had either never known at all or else discarded for her own good reasons. In various ways they tried to express their gratitude. As she approached the table now, there was a general straightening of the shoulders, a noticeable effort to appear gay and unconcerned, which seemed even to transmit itself to Robert Hume. He looked up as he made room for her beside him, and his moody eyes brightened.

"I am glad you have come," he said simply. She sat down, and the soft material of her dress brushed against his hand, the whole atmosphere about him becoming delicately impregnated with some evasive fragrance. He felt himself transported from the shoddy would-be elegance of his surroundings to another unforgettable sphere which he had left behind him.

"Why are you glad?" she said, smiling into his face.

"Need you ask?" he answered. "You are like a piece of dear old England." His looks conveyed more than his words. It said plainly, "You are beautiful; you remind me of all I have ever loved," and something in his thin, hungry face seemed to add, "and lost."

She turned away from his intense gaze—not unkindly, but as though she had

understood and feared to show too warm a sympathy.

"Talking of England," the captain put in, "I 'ave a present for you, Monsieur 'Ume. When you were so poorly in Aden I found you this English journal. I 'eard you say you wished to see one."

He drew a folded *Daily Graphic* from his breast pocket and handed it across. "It is many days old, I fear," he apologized.

Hume almost snatched the paper. He had changed colour, and the slight trembling of his hand betrayed a strange but half-controlled excitement.

"Thank you," he said mechanically.

He was about to place the gift in his own pocket, when his eyes—perhaps by chance, perhaps drawn by some magnetism—met those of his *vis-à-vis*. For the first time, he remembered the presence of Mrs. Hadley's nurse. People usually ignored her. There was something in the small pale face and piercing stormy eyes which kept them at a distance, though but for that expression of harassment she would have been almost pretty. Hume hesitated.

"Is there anything particular you want to know, nurse?" he asked.

She nodded, with her eyes on the paper.

"Yes," she said. "Just before we left England a submarine was wrecked somewhere off the south coast. I knew no one on board, but the subject interests me. I should be glad to know how it happened—and who were saved."

He looked at her intently for a moment. Then he began to unfold the paper. He did so with deliberation, as though he were taking some malicious pleasure in the performance, and his mouth was twisted into grim ironical lines.

"You will excuse my satisfying a lady's curiosity at the dinner table, captain?" he said. "Here is a short paragraph."

He then read aloud, with a raised inflection of the voice:

"'The work of salving the submarine ——, which, as will be remembered, was wrecked last week off the south coast, has now begun. Hitherto only two bodies have been recovered. That of the commander of the ill-fated vessel, Lieutenant Andrews, was not among them; but it is believed that it will eventually be found in his berth, where one survivor reports that he was resting at the time of the accident. On the other hand, there are rumours that he was able to escape, and reached the shore safely; but no definite report has been received.'"

He refolded the paper. "That is all," he concluded.

Captain Anglois stroked his short grey beard thoughtfully.

"I 'ave an English friend who is what you call 'on ze know,'" he said, "and 'e told me zat ze people say ze lieutenant was not quite 'isself—*un peu je ne sais quoi*." He made an expressive gesture.

"You mean that he was drunk?" Hume said, breaking roughly upon the silence that followed the captain's statement. "There I must venture to contradict, *cher capitaine*. Drunkenness was not Lieutenant Andrews's vice. As his most intimate friend, I know the secret that he kept carefully from the rest of the world, and that secret is the key to the whole matter. A year or two ago he was sent out to the Gold Coast. The climate shattered his health for the time being and left him cursed with insomnia in its most diabolical form. He stood it during months of torture, and then he took to morphia." He shrugged his shoulders. "If you know anything, you know that morphia is a fiend not lightly shaken off once it has got hold on a man's soul. I believe he did his best—God knows. In the end he might have won. But the catastrophe came too soon, and he and others with him have paid the penalty."

Mrs. Hadley pushed back her plate with a gesture of disgust.

"You mean—he was in that state at the time of the accident?"

"That's about it."

"The accident would never have happened if he had been at his post?"

"One can't be sure—no, probably it would never have happened."

He was looking her straight in the face, and as he saw her expression a smile worked at the corners of his mouth. "What is the verdict on such a man?" he asked.

The captain pulled a half-pitying grimace.

"*Pauvre diable—il est mort*," he said expressively.

"And if he were not dead—if he escaped?"

"Then 'e no better than a ship's rat—'e leave the sinking ship and save 'is own life. *C'est un poltron*." Hume looked up.

"You think death the worst punishment?" he said. "To me it seems the easiest. If he had lived there would have been the shame and remorse, the ineffaceable knowledge that his weakness had caused the destruction of those who had trusted him. One can imagine that death would have been a release to that man—life, Hell."

His words came rapidly, almost passionately, and with an abrupt change from the cynical coldness with which he had hitherto spoken. Mrs. Hadley threw back her head.

"No matter," she said, "whatever price he paid he was not the less despicable. The man who risks the lives of his comrades for the sake of a wretched vice—ugh! it makes me sick. I am sorry, Mr. Hume, I forgot—he was your friend——"

She looked at him with a shy regret in her eyes. Hume laughed roughly.

"*Was* my friend," he emphasized. "There isn't a word you can say which I should not endorse, Mrs. Hadley. He was a cur and a coward. Death saved him from a life's torture and his family from disgrace. If he had lived—God knows what his punishment would have been."

"It could not be hard enough," she said, rising to her feet. "There! take me upstairs, Mr. Hume. I feel suffocated in this air." He gave her his arm and led her up on to the empty deck. From then till the darkness sank upon the quiet ocean he walked backwards and forwards at her side, listening to her gay chatter and watching her still youthful profile with a storm of mingled loneliness and longing drumming at his heart. "I love you, and I want you!" he repeated to himself over and over again until the words maddened him with their hopeless monotony. As the ten o'clock watch sounded, a woman's frail silhouette rose against the lighted hatchway, and Mrs. Hadley stopped.

"There is my nurse waiting for me," she said. "Isn't it silly that a woman of my age should have a nurse? But the doctor said I must have her, or my silly nerves would go wrong again. He told me I must go with her on a deadly dull journey, when I should be only with people who were either boring or horrid. I don't know what he would say if he knew, for I can't dislike you, and you certainly don't bore me."

"Thank you," he said gravely. He brought her to the hatchway and watched her till she had climbed down the narrow staircase and disappeared. When he turned he found Nurse Graham at his side. He meant to pass her with a curt "Good-night," but again her face and its expression arrested him. Her thin cheeks were bright with angry colour; she held her head high.

"Why do you look at me like that, nurse?" he asked with an effort at light mockery. "Have I offended you?"

"He was your friend," she retorted passionately, "and you let them say those things of him! Even if they were true you should have spared his memory—you should have stood up for him, not heaped the disgrace, the shame upon his name. Who are you that you have the right to judge? What do you know of the agonies that man may have suffered when the fiend had once got grip on his soul? What do you know of the awful sleepless nights, of the temptation of relief, of the struggle always harder, always more hopeless? Have you no pity, no mercy?" She stopped breathless, her small white hands clenched. "You must think me mad!" she stammered. He shook his head. His own features had softened somewhat, so that his whole face seemed younger, less bitter.

"I don't think you are mad," he said. "I think perhaps you may be right. Perhaps after all he deserved a little pity. At any rate, you have pitied him. And—he was my friend—I thank you." He held out his hand impulsively, and she took it, and for a moment they stood silent, looking at each other. Then she turned away, but not before he had seen that there were tears glistening in her eyes.

II

ROBERT HUME found her leaning against the bulwarks, watching the foam break from the vessel's side and drift sternwards, and he stopped to talk with her. He did not usually talk to people, but she looked a forlorn little figure in her simple grey dress, and their conversation of the night before had drawn him to her. Without knowing why, he felt certain that she was labouring under some heavy burden, and he who had his own burden understood enough to pity. She greeted him with a faint smile of pleasure.

"Mrs. Hadley is not ready yet," she said, as though answering an unspoken question. "She will not be long."

"Mrs. Hadley is very delicate?" he suggested, taking his place at her side. A faint scornful line crept round her mouth.

"She is run down, that is all," she said. "There is nothing serious the matter with her. If there were I should not be here." He saw her expression and heard the contemptuous inflexion of her voice, but he knew by instinct that neither were directed against Mrs. Hadley.

"You do not undertake serious cases?" he asked.

"No," she answered shortly. "Not now." Her tone was final, but curiosity urged him further.

"Might I ask why not?" She hesitated, and then to his surprise she laughed, though with a certain roughness which devoided the sound of all mirth.

"There is a slight analogy in our circumstances," she said. "I, too, had a friend, a woman whom I trusted absolutely, in whom I believed above everything in the world. She was a nurse like myself, and all the most dangerous cases were given into her hands—because she was so trustworthy. One night a patient died—it was a little child—died because my friend had slept when she should have watched. That broke my nerve. You see, I suffered with her the remorse, the self-reproach——" She stopped, frowning, as though at some painful recollection.

"That is why you understood so well last night?" he suggested gently.

"Yes—perhaps." There was a long silence between them, and then he began to talk of other things—impersonal things—not of Mrs. Hadley. And this was strange, because at first he had been impelled by an almost morbid desire to talk of the woman who, in the short time they had been together, had spun an unbreakable web about his heavy and unwilling heart. Now he was able, even eager, to turn to conversation elsewhere, so that indirectly he could fathom farther into the depths of this strange, close-lipped little woman. He wanted to know more about her, and he talked on, unconscious that the time was passing, until suddenly Mrs. Hadley stood before them in all the glory of soft muslins and rich laces. She was looking unusually lovely, unusually fresh and youthful, and his heart bounded with the old painful happiness as her hand rested in his.

"I have come as a messenger," she said gaily. "I met the doctor on the steps, and he asked me to tell you and nurse that he wanted to speak to you both in the captain's cabin."

She laughed and shook her finger.

"I believe there is a plot on foot to get up some frivolity to amuse me," she declared. "The doctor has always been threatening something of the sort, and you can tell him from me that it is very wrong of him. He knows I am only here in order to be bored back to health."

"At any rate, we must obey the summons," Hume said reluctantly. "Come, nurse!" They descended the hatchway together. At the bottom Nurse Graham stopped suddenly.

"Do you ever have presentiments?" she asked.

"Sometimes. Why?"

"Because I have one now. I feel as though something had happened, or was going to happen." He made no answer. They had reached the door of the captain's cabin. He tapped sharply, but though a muffled voice answered them he did not move. For an instant both hesitated as though restrained by the same indefinable foreboding. Then with an impatient jerk of the shoulders Hume turned the handle and entered. The captain was seated at the table, his face buried in his arms. He did not move or speak, and they glanced from his bowed figure to the doctor who stood at the far end of the cabin. The little man's face was whiter than they had ever before seen it—whiter, and if possible more anxious. He motioned them to shut the door.

"I have sent for you because you are the two in whom I have the most confidence," he said. "And I have something of the utmost gravity to communicate. The plague has broken out on board this ship. Captain Anglois and the second mate, Monsieur Chénard, are its first victims."

The announcement burst upon them like a clap of thunder. For a moment no one spoke. They avoided each other's eyes, and the silence grew oppressive with dread and fear of what was to come. Hume took a step forward. His first thought had been for Mrs. Hadley, beautiful, delicately nurtured Mrs. Hadley.

"Are you sure?" he said. The doctor

approached the prostrate man and with deft fingers turned back his coat sleeve.

"You, nurse, may perhaps be able to recognize the signs," he said. They saw the livid red spots, and when the unfortunate captain lifted his face the one hope left them died to ashes.

"*Moi, je suis perdu,*" he said in a rough dry voice they hardly recognized. "*Je le sais, et cela m'est égal—je n'ai pas peur, moi.* No, no, I 'ave no fear, not for me, but for my ship, *La Belle France!* Who will bring her to port when I and Chénard are gone? She has no one else. *Les autres sont des sots.* They will run her on to ze rocks, and she is all I 'ave, all I leave my wife, my child——" He burst into a storm of terrible half-delirious sobs, and the three looked at each other in blank despair. *La Belle France* was badly manned with officers. If, indeed, the worst should happen, and they should be left pilotless —what then? It was this question they asked each other in one wordless glance. It rose for the moment darker, more threatening even than the phantom Death which stood amidst them in the narrow cabin.

"And if I promised you that your ship should reach Melbourne safely, would you be less afraid?" They looked at Hume in dull wonderment. His face had changed. Energy and resolve had transfigured him. Captain Anglois reeled to his feet.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he gasped. "Who can help, who can save us?"

"I can," came the quiet answer. "I am a sailor, and I know these seas well. I will bring *La Belle France* safe to port, God helping me!" He swung round. "And you, doctor, you will do your share. You will fight this death—you and——" He hesitated. Nurse Graham stood at the doctor's side.

"This is my chance," she said. No one noticed her words then, though afterwards Hume remembered them. For the second time he held out his hand to her.

"You are a brave woman," he said. "I knew you would help us. Above all things Mrs. Hadley must not be told. If she knew that the plague was on board——" He stopped, interrupted by a muffled scream close at hand, the soft thud of a falling body. In one bound he had reached the door, and wrenched it open. A pitecus bundle of muslins lay huddled together in the narrow passage. He saw no more than the lovely ashy face. With a savage jerk he flung aside the captain, who had stumbled blindly forward, and bending down gathered Mrs. Hadley in his arms.

"Keep back!" he shouted. "Keep back! Don't come near her!" Her eyes opened, and she clung to him like a frightened child.

"I heard!" she whispered. "I thought it was some joke, and I listened. Oh, God, save me, save me!"

"I will save you!" he answered, and he bore her thence as though the hands of the hideous death behind them had already clutched her.

III

ROBERT HUME stood at the helm of *La Belle France* and guided her course through the churning waters. The bitter east wind drew no colour to his cheeks, and his eyes, fixed on the bank of clouds towards which they were driving, were dark with weariness and physical pain. Once he glanced at the woman cowering in the rough shelter which he had built at his side. She was wrapped in furs, but her face was pinched with cold, and she met his gaze with a look of mingled fear and hope.

"You think I am safe?" she repeated for the hundredth time. "You don't think it can reach me here? I am feeling so well and strong. It begins with fever, doesn't it? And I have no fever. If you could only feel my hands——" She laughed shakily, and drew her furs closer about her. A gust of wind broke against the tarpaulins which protected her, and the laugh wavered and became a half-hysterical sob of terror. "Oh, how the wind frightens me!" she moaned. "You don't think it will get worse? Why doesn't the captain come, or the second mate, or whatever he is called? You said they were better." He made no answer. He could not tell the truth. He could not tell her that twenty-four hours before Captain Anglois's body had been consigned to the water, nor that below deck Death was striding from victim to victim with cruel, rapacious swiftness. He could not tell her because he loved her too much, though unknown to him his love was mingled with that pity which is near contempt.

"Do not be afraid," he said, between his teeth. "You know I would give my

life to keep you from all harm. Even now——"

"Even now——" she repeated questioningly.

"Even now I am here for your sake," he said.

She clasped her hands with a pretty movement of gratitude.

"I know. And you make me feel so safe. I have such confidence in you."

"You do not know me," he said roughly.

"I do know you. I know that you are good and strong and brave——"

"Don't!" He lifted his hand as though to ward off some blow. "You make me realize——" He stopped again.

"What do I make you realize?"

There was an almost caressing note in the low voice.

"What might have been—what I have lost."

He kept his eyes fixed sternly ahead over the lonely waste of water. His whole strength seemed concentrated on some hard, inward struggle so that he could not face her, and when suddenly her hand rested on his he started as though he had been touched with fire.

"Look!" she said. "What is that—there—straight ahead?"

He followed the indication of her eager finger. He felt her tremble, and as his eyes scanned the stormy horizon her excitement kindled a sombre glow in his own hard, set face.

"It is a ship," he said. "A tramp of some sort, bearing straight down our course, too. We should be within hailing distance in an hour." He spoke half to himself, and he still did not look at her. Her hand tightened on his.

"If we were only safe on board!" she whispered. "If we could only escape from this poisonous prison—you and I——"

She left the thought unfinished. A violent gust from the coming storm drove the spray into their faces, and when they had brushed away the blinding water they saw that they were no longer alone. Nurse Graham stood on the bridge. Her hair was wind-tossed over the pale face, which seemed to have grown smaller and thinner. But the eyes were brilliant.

"I have come with a message from the doctor," she said abruptly. "Monsieur Chénard is dead. His last words were that the command should pass into your hands. There is no one else."

She ignored his gesture of appeal. "Mrs. Hadley, it is better that you should know the truth," she said.

The woman at Hume's side shivered and drew back as though from contamination.

"What is—the truth?" she stammered.

"Shall I tell her—Mr. Hume?"

For an instant he made no answer. His eyes were fixed on the horizon, and a hard, reckless line carved itself about his mouth.

"Tell her!" he said.

Nurse Graham stepped farther on to the bridge. "Five of the passengers are stricken," she said. "Two are 'suspect,' the others are helping the doctor like heroes. Of the crew only ten are safe cases, and they are lying huddled in their berths. They have refused to go back to the engines. They say a hurricane is getting up, and that the rats are leaving the ship. They believe that we are doomed."

Mrs. Hadley uttered a piercing cry.

"Doomed! Mr. Hume—is that true? Is there no hope?"

"I can hold out very little."

"My God! You say that so quietly! Can't you do something?" His numbed hands still grasped the helm of the drifting vessel. He looked down into the lovely upturned face, and his own lit up.

"Signal!" she whispered. "Signal! Offer them any price they like. Surely for money they will take the risk. If you love me, save me—save us both!"

"If I love you!" he repeated.

"As I love you!" she broke in recklessly. "Oh, save us! What can you do here? The ship is not yours. You are not the captain. You can do nothing. For our love's sake——" She was smiling up at him with a strange coquetry behind which terror lurked in all its grim force. But he saw only her beauty, the dazzling brilliancy of her pleading eyes. He held her fast by both arms.

"Mrs. Hadley—you don't know who I am," he stammered. "If you knew you would shrink from me."

"Never!"

"Not if I were a man haunted by some contemptible vice, an outcast, bearing a false name, flying from a deserved punishment——"

"You are the man I love!" she answered.

"Swear it—whatever I am, whatever I have done!"

"I swear it—only save me! My life belongs to you!"

With an oath Hume seized a rope and lashed the helm firm. There was an expression on his flushed, dogged face that matched the oath in its reckless violence. He grasped the woman who still clung to him, and half carried her towards the steps.

"Come, then!" he cried, and then turning, he repeated, "Come!"

Nurse Graham stood motionless, looking at him. Her hand rested on the helm. Her head was thrown back. There was pride and a breathing, passionate resolution in her attitude.

"No, Lieutenant Andrews," she said: "I at least cannot desert the ship twice."

He stopped. Almost mechanically he let his trembling burden slip to the ground. The hot colour died out of his cheeks, leaving him suddenly pale and quiet.

"You know?" he said.

She nodded.

"Yes, I know. At first it was no more than a guess. Something you said made me think. Afterwards, when you took over the command I was certain. I don't know how you escaped death or detection—I do not care to know—but I pitied you with my whole heart because I knew what you had suffered and would suffer. You see, I, too, have human life upon my conscience. It was I who let the child die. It was I who failed to fulfil my duty through a moment's weakness—the one slip—as yours, perhaps, was the last of many. God forgive us both!"

"God forgive us both!" he repeated, in hoarse despair. Both had forgotten Mrs. Hadley. She turned to them with an angry stamp of impatience.

"What does it matter what you are or what you have done?" she cried. "Save me!"

He looked at her. Perhaps in that moment he remembered her proud, scornful words which nights before had burnt into his guilt-laden soul. Perhaps in that moment he caught a glimpse of the real woman beneath the gaudy seeming. He turned again. Margaret Graham held out her hands as though to draw him back.

"It does matter what you are!" she said. "It matters whether you are a brave man striving to wipe out a past weakness, or whether you are no better than the rats that desert the sinking ship. Don't you see"—a flame of energy and hope illuminated her pale, earnest face—"don't you see it is the chance that has been given us—the chance to atone!"

He put his hand to his head like a man waking from some black stupor.

"Atone!" he repeated.

"Yes, yes!" she cried. "The chance to throw off our burden and begin again. Down below there are lives for whom we—you and I—are the last, the only hope. Will you desert them, too?"

Her hand was still outstretched. He caught it and held it in a strong, firm grasp. The flame of her enthusiasm had touched him. It shone out of his eyes; it burnt brightly through the dark shadow of bitterness and self-contempt.

"Not this time!" he said. "Not this time!" In that moment of resurrection from the past he forgot the beautiful face turned seawards in straining anxiety. He saw only the woman whose hand had drawn him back from a second and deeper Hell.

"See!" Mrs. Hadley cried. "It is getting closer and closer. Signal, or it will be too late!" He remembered then with a painful start.

"I cannot leave the ship," he said. "And you——"

"Signal!" she repeated furiously. He understood her then. He understood the love for which he had been ready to barter his soul. Quietly he unlashed the helm.

"I will signal," he said. "If money can save you, you will be saved."

And money saved her. An hour later a great ugly merchantman, homeward bound, hove to within hailing distance of *La Belle France*, and after many delays a boat was sent over the uneasy water and bore Mrs. Hadley out of reach of danger. Hume bade her "God-speed" from the gangway, and if he watched her disappear with the pain of bitter disillusion, he knew at least that she felt nothing but relief. She was safe—that was all she had asked of him—and he went back to his post and cast no backward glance at the vessel steaming into the stormy darkness. His eyes were fixed ahead with the stern resolution of a man who sees death sweeping down upon him and knows that he stands alone to meet the onslaught. The wind had risen to a gale, and, like some unseen phantom, shrieked round his ears and lashed the waves to threatening, moving walls of water. *La Belle France* rode bravely, and something in Hume

thrilled as she rose triumphant from the deluge that broke against her sides. The old gnawing temptation that had been his ruin in the past was forgotten in the joy of battle. He thought of the lives for which he was fighting and of the woman who had bade him fight. And even as he thought of her he heard her voice calling him through the gathering gloom.

"I have told them what you have done!" she cried. "The men know that you have stuck to the ship in spite of everything, and it has put new life into them. They are going back to their work at the engines, and, better than all, the doctor believes that we are fighting a winning battle and that the worst is over. God grant that many of us may yet see Melbourne!"

"God grant it!" he said. "And God bless you!" She had climbed to his side on the dripping, wind-swept bridge, and by the light of the lantern that burnt beside the compass he saw her face, and its look filled him with a strange peace.

"You have saved me," he said. "You have saved the best in me. An hour ago I was a mad coward, ready to throw away my last chance of salvation for a lovely face. But now I am sane. Can you trust me?"

"I do trust you," she said. "Otherwise I should not care."

A new hope burnt up suddenly in the outcast's heart. He no longer saw the black clouds rolling up against them from the stormy horizon. He saw the vista of a new life bravely lived, the vision of a comradeship sealed in trial and temptation.

"You have stood by me in my worst hour," he said. "Will you stand by me to the end?"

"To the end!" she answered.

"That may be soon—or it may be many years."

"Time can make no difference."

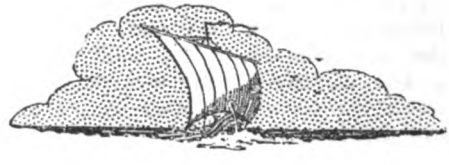
He took a tiny glass phial from his pocket and held it to her.

"This is my first gift of gratitude," he said. She took it, and when she had glanced at it she lifted her arm and flung the poison from her. A gust of the rising wind seemed to seize it and bear it with a shriek of triumph into the gathering night.

"There goes the past!" she cried joyously. "The future is ours—yours and mine—to make of it what we will."

"An atonement!" he said.

They exchanged a handclasp, and when she had gone he faced the storm alone with the strong, composed face of a conqueror.



The Light of Arcady

A WHITE gull and a silver sail,
And a dazzling golden sea;
A light breeze and an endless trail
That leads to Arcady;
A blue sky and a curving shore,
And a beach of drifted sand;
A snug house with an open door,
And a waving beckoning hand.

The gull dips and the sail tips,
And shadows dim the deep;
The winds shift and the clouds drift,
And the trail is hard to keep;
A dark sky and a darker shore,
And the beach with spray is white;
But the snug house with open door
Has a gleaming beacon light.

Sing ho, my heart! though a lass may weep,
There is Love awaiting me;
I'll steer my ship across the deep
To the light of Arcady.

B. C. N.

The Door in the Wall

"Out of this dry glitter of vanity . . ."

By H. G. WELLS

ONE confidential evening, not three months ago, Lionel Wallace told me this story of the Door in the Wall. And at the time I thought that so far as he was concerned it was a true story.

He told it me with such a direct simplicity of conviction that I could not do otherwise than believe in him. But in the morning, in my own flat, I woke to a different atmosphere, and as I lay in bed and recalled the things he had told me, stripped of the glamour of his earnest slow voice, denuded of the focussed, shaded table light, the shadowy atmosphere that wrapped about him and me, and the pleasant bright things, the dessert and glasses and napery of the dinner we had shared, making them for the time a bright little world quite cut off from everyday realities, I saw it all as frankly incredible. "He was mystifying!" I said, and then: "How well he did it! . . . It isn't quite the thing I should have expected him, of all people, to do well."

Afterwards as I sat up in bed and sipped my morning tea, I found myself trying to account for the flavour of reality that perplexed me in his impossible reminiscences, by supposing they did in some way suggest, present, convey—I hardly know which word to use—experiences it was otherwise impossible to tell.

Well, I don't resort to that explanation now. I have got over my intervening doubts. I believe now, as I believed at the moment of telling, that Wallace did to the very best of his ability strip the truth of his secret for me. But whether he himself saw, or only thought he saw, whether he himself was the possessor of an inestimable privilege or the victim of a fantastic dream, I cannot pretend to guess. Even the facts of his death, which ended my doubts for ever, throw no light on that.

That much the reader must judge for himself.

I forget now what chance comment or criticism of mine moved so reticent a man to confide in me. He was, I think, defending himself against an imputation of slackness and unreliability I had made in relation to a great public movement, in which he had disappointed me. But he plunged suddenly. "I have," he said, "a preoccupation——

"I know," he went on, after a pause, "I have been negligent. The fact is—it isn't a case of ghosts or apparitions—but—it's an odd thing to tell of, Redmond—I am haunted. I am haunted by something—that rather takes the light out of things, that fills me with longings . . ."

He paused, checked by that English shyness that so often overcomes us when we would speak of moving or grave or beautiful things. "You were at Saint Æthelstan's all through," he said, and for a moment that seemed to me quite irrelevant. "Well,"—and he paused. Then very haltingly at first, but afterwards more easily, he began to tell of the thing that was hidden in his life, the haunting memory of a beauty and a happiness that filled his heart with insatiable longings, that made all the interests and spectacle of worldly life seem dull and tedious and vain to him.

Now that I have the clue to it, the thing seems written visibly in his face. I have a photograph in which that look of detachment has been caught and intensified. It reminds me of what a woman once said of him—a woman who had loved him greatly. "Suddenly," she said, "the interest goes out of him. He forgets you. He doesn't care a rap for you—under his very nose . . ."

Yet the interest was not always out of him, and when he was holding his attention to a thing Wallace could contrive to be an extremely successful man. His career, indeed, is set with successes. He left me behind him long ago: he soared up

over my head, and cut a figure in the world that I couldn't cut—anyhow. He was still a year short of forty, and they say now that he would have been in office and very probably in the new Cabinet if he had lived. At school he always beat me without effort—as it were by nature. We were at school together at Saint Æthelstan's College in West Kensington for almost all our school-time. He came into the school as my co-equal, but he left far above me, in a blaze of scholarships and brilliant performance. Yet I think I made a fair average running. And it was at school I heard first of the "Door in the Wall"—that I was to hear of a second time only a month before his death.

To him at least the Door in the Wall was a real door, leading through a real wall to immortal realities. Of that I am now quite assured.

And it came into his life quite early, when he was a little fellow between five and six. I remember how, as he sat making his confession to me with a slow gravity, he reasoned and reckoned the date of it. "There was," he said, "a crimson Virginia creeper in it—all one bright uniform crimson, in a clear amber sunshine against a white wall. That came into the impression somehow, though I don't clearly remember how, and there were horse-chestnut leaves upon the clean pavement outside the green door. They were blotched yellow and green, you know, not brown nor dirty, so that they must have been new fallen. I take it that means October. I look out for horse-chestnut leaves every year and I ought to know.

"If I'm right in that, I was about five years and four months old."

He was, he said, rather a precocious little boy—he learnt to talk at an abnormally early age, and he was so sane and "old-fashioned," as people say, that he was permitted an amount of initiative that most children scarcely attain by seven or eight. His mother died when he was two, and he was under the less vigilant and authoritative care of a nursery governess. His father was a stern, preoccupied lawyer, who gave him little attention, and expected great things of him. For all his brightness he found life a little gray and dull, I think. And one day he wandered.

He could not recall the particular neglect that enabled him to get away, nor the course he took among the West Kensington roads. All that had faded among the incurable blurs of memory. But the white wall and the green door stood out quite distinctly.

As his memory of that childish experience ran, he did at the very first sight of that door experience a peculiar emotion, an attraction, a desire to get to the door and open it and walk in. And at the same time he had the clearest conviction that either it was unwise or it was wrong of him—he could not tell which—to yield to this attraction. He insisted upon it as a curious thing that he knew from the very beginning—unless memory has played him the queerest trick—that the door was unfastened, and that he could go in as he chose.

I seem to see the figure of that little boy, drawn and repelled. And it was very clear in his mind, too, though why it should be so was never explained, that his father would be very angry if he went in through that door.

Wallace described all these moments of hesitation to me with the utmost particularity. He went right past the door, and then, with his hands in his pockets and making an infantile attempt to whistle, strolled right along beyond the end of the wall. There he recalls a number of mean dirty shops, and particularly that of a plumber and decorator with a dusty disorder of earthenware pipes, sheet lead, ball taps, pattern books of wall paper, and tins of enamel. He stood pretending to examine these things, and *coveting*, passionately desiring, the green door.

Then, he said, he had a gust of emotion. He made a run for it, lest hesitation should grip him again; he went plump with outstretched hand through the green door and let it slam behind him. And so, in a trice, he came into the garden that has haunted all his life.

It was very difficult for Wallace to give me his full sense of that garden into which he came.

There was something in the very air of it that exhilarated, that gave one a sense of lightness and good happening and well-being; there was something in the sight of it that made all its colour clean and perfect and subtly luminous. In the instant of coming into it one was exquisitely glad—as only in rare moments, and when one is young and joyful one can be glad

in this world. And everything was beautiful there. . . .

Wallace mused before he went on telling me. "You see," he said, with the doubtful inflection of a man who pauses at incredible things, "there were two great panthers there. . . . Yes, spotted panthers. And I was not afraid. There was a long wide path with marble-edged flower borders on either side, and these two huge velvety beasts were playing there with a ball. One looked up and came towards me, a little curious as it seemed. It came right up to me, rubbed its soft round ear very gently against the small hand I held out, and purred. It was, I tell you, an enchanted garden. I know. And the size? Oh! it stretched far and wide, this way and that. I believe there were hills far away. Heaven knows where West Kensington had suddenly got to. And somehow it was just like coming home.

"You know, in the very moment the door swung to behind me, I forgot the road with its fallen chestnut leaves, its cabs and tradesmen's carts, I forgot the sort of gravitational pull back to the discipline and obedience of home, I forgot all hesitations and fear, forgot discretion, forgot all the intimate realities of this life. I became in a moment a very glad and wonder-happy little boy—in another world. It was a world with a different quality, a warmer, more penetrating and mellower light, with a faint clear gladness in its air, and wisps of sun-touched cloud in the blueness of its sky. And before me ran this long wide path, invitingly, with weedless beds on either side, rich with untended flowers, and these two great panthers. I put my little hands fearlessly on their soft fur, and caressed their round ears and the sensitive corners under their ears, and played with them, and it was as though they welcomed me home. There was a keen sense of home-coming in my mind, and when presently a tall, fair girl appeared in the pathway and came to meet me, smiling, and said 'Well?' to me, and lifted me, and kissed me, and put me down, and led me by the hand, there was no amazement, but only an impression of delightful rightness, of being reminded of happy things that had in some strange way been overlooked. There were broad red steps, I remember, that came into view between spikes of delphinium, and up these we went to a great avenue between very old and shady dark trees. All down this avenue, you know, between the red chapped stems, were marble seats of honour and statuary, and very tame and friendly white doves . . .

"Along this cool avenue my girl-friend led me, looking down—I recall the pleasant lines, the finely-modelled chin of her sweet kind face—asking me questions in a soft, agreeable voice, and telling me things, pleasant things I know, though what they were I was never able to recall. . . . Presently a little Capuchin monkey, very clean, with a fur of ruddy brown and kindly hazel eyes, came down a tree to us and ran beside me, looking up at me and grinning, and presently leapt to my shoulder. So we two went on our way in great happiness."

He paused.

"Go on," I said.

"I remember little things. We passed an old man musing among laurels, I remember, and a place gay with paroquets, and came through a broad shaded colonnade to a spacious cool palace, full of pleasant fountains, full of beautiful things, full of the quality and promise of heart's desire. And there were many things and many people, some that still seem to stand out clearly and some that are a little vague; but all these people were beautiful and kind. In some way—I don't know how—it was conveyed to me that they all were kind to me, glad to have me there, and filling me with gladness by their gestures, by the touch of their hands, by the welcome and love in their eyes. Yes——"

He mused for a while. "Playmates I found there. That was very much to me, because I was a lonely little boy. They played delightful games in a grass-covered court where there was a sundial set about with flowers. And as one played one loved. . . .

"But—it's odd—there's a gap in my memory. I don't remember the games we played. I never remembered. Afterwards, as a child, I spent long hours trying, even with tears, to recall the form of that happiness. I wanted to play it all over again—in my nursery—by myself. No! All I remember is the happiness and two dear playfellows who were most with me. . . . Then presently came a sombre dark woman, with a grave, pale face, and dreamy eyes, a sombre woman, wearing a soft long robe of pale purple, who

carried a book, and beckoned and took me aside with her into a gallery above a hall—though my playmates were loath to have me go, and ceased their game and stood watching as I was carried away. 'Come back to us!' they cried. 'Come back to us soon!' I looked up at her face, but she heeded them not at all. Her face was very gentle and grave. She took me to a seat in the gallery, and I stood beside her, ready to look at her book as she opened it upon her knee. The pages fell open. She pointed, and I looked, marvelling, for in the living pages of that book I saw myself; it was a story about myself, and in it were all the things that had happened to me since ever I was born. . . .

"It was wonderful to me, because the pages of that book were not pictures, you understand, but realities."

Wallace paused gravely—looked at me doubtfully.

"Go on," I said. "I understand."

"They were realities—yes, they must have been; people moved and things came and went in them; my dear mother, whom I had nearly forgotten; then my father, stern and upright, the servants, the nursery, all the familiar things of home. Then the front door and the busy streets, with traffic to and fro. I looked and marvelled, and looked half doubtfully again into the woman's face and turned the pages over, skipping this and that, to see more of this book and more, and so at last I came to myself hovering and hesitating outside the green door in the long white wall, and felt again the conflict and the fear.

"'And next?' I cried, and would have turned on, but the cool hand of the grave woman delayed me.

"'Next?' I insisted, and struggled gently with her hand, pulling up her fingers with all my childish strength, and as she yielded and the page came over she bent down upon me like a shadow and kissed my brow.

"But the page did not show the enchanted garden, nor the panthers, nor the girl who had led me by the hand, nor the playfellows who had been so loath to let me go. It showed a long grey street in West Kensington, in that chill hour of afternoon before the lamps are lit, and I was there, a wretched little figure, weeping aloud, for all that I could do to restrain myself, and I was weeping because I could not return to my dear playfellows who had called after me, 'Come back to us! Come back to us soon!' I was there. This was no page in a book, but harsh reality; that enchanted place and the restraining hand of the grave mother at whose knee I stood had gone—whither had they gone?"

He had halted again, and remained for a time staring into the fire.

"Oh! the woefulness of that return!" he murmured.

"Well?" I said, after a minute or so.

"Poor little wretch I was!—brought back to this grey world again! As I realized the fullness of what had happened to me, I gave way to quite ungovernable grief. And the shame and humiliation of that public weeping and my disgraceful home-coming remain with me still. I see again the benevolent-looking old gentleman in gold spectacles who stopped and spoke to me—prodding me first with his umbrella. 'Poor little chap,' said he; 'and are you lost then?'—and me a London boy of five and more! And he must needs bring in a kindly young policeman and make a crowd of me, and so march me home. Sobbing, conspicuous, and frightened, I came back from the enchanted garden to the steps of my father's house.

"That is as well as I can remember my vision of that garden—the garden that haunts me still. Of course, I can convey nothing of that indescribable quality of translucent unreality, that *difference* from the common things of experience that hung about it all; but that—that is what happened. If it was a dream, I am sure it was a daytime and altogether extraordinary dream. . . . H'm!—naturally there followed a terrible questioning, by my aunt, my father, the nurse, the governess—every one. . . .

"I tried to tell them, and my father gave me my first thrashing for telling lies. When afterwards I tried to tell my aunt, she punished me again for my wicked persistence. Then, as I said, every one was forbidden to listen to me, to hear a word about it. Even my fairy tale books were taken away from me for a time—because I was too 'imaginative.' Eh? Yes, they did that! My father belonged to the old school. . . . And my story was driven back upon myself. I whispered it to my pillow—my pillow that was often damp and salt to my whispering lips with

childish tears. And I added always to my official and less fervent prayers this one heartfelt request: 'Please God I may dream of the garden. Oh! take me back to my garden! Take me back to my garden!' I dreamt often of the garden. I may have added to it, I may have changed it; I do not know. . . . All this, you understand, is an attempt to reconstruct from fragmentary memories a very early experience. Between that and the other consecutive memories of my boyhood there is a gulf. A time came when it seemed impossible I should ever speak of that wonder glimpse again."

I asked an obvious question.

"No," he said. "I don't remember that I ever attempted to find my way back to the garden in those early years. This seems odd to me now, but I think that very probably a closer watch was kept on my movements after this misadventure to prevent my going astray. No, it wasn't till you knew me that I tried for the garden again. And I believe there was a period—incredible as it seems now—when I forgot the garden altogether—when I was about eight or nine it may have been. Do you remember me as a kid at Saint Æthelstan's?"

"Rather!"

"I didn't show any signs, did I, in those days of having a secret dream?"

II

HE looked up with a sudden smile.

"Did you ever play North-West Passage with me? . . . No, of course you didn't come my way!"

"It was the sort of game," he went on, "that every imaginative child plays all day. The idea was the discovery of a North-West Passage to school. The way to school was plain enough; the game consisted in finding some way that wasn't plain, starting off ten minutes early in some almost hopeless direction, and working my way round through unaccustomed streets to my goal. And one day I got entangled among some rather low-class streets on the other side of Campden Hill, and I began to think that for once the game would be against me and that I should get to school late. I tried rather desperately a street that seemed a *cul-de-sac* and found a passage at the end. I hurried through that with renewed hope. 'I shall do it yet,' I said, and passed a row of frowsy little shops that were inexplicably familiar to me, and behold! there was my long white wall and the green door that led to the enchanted garden!

"The thing whacked upon me suddenly. Then, after all, that garden, that wonderful garden, wasn't a dream!"

He paused.

"I suppose my second experience with the green door marks the world of difference there is between the busy life of a schoolboy and the infinite leisure of a child. Anyhow, this second time I didn't for a moment think of going in straight away. You see . . . for one thing, my mind was full of the idea of getting to school in time—set on not breaking my record for punctuality. I must surely have felt *some* little desire at least to try the door—yes, I must have felt that. . . . But I seem to remember the attraction of the door mainly as another obstacle to my overmastering determination to get to school. I was immensely interested by this discovery I had made, of course—I went on with my mind full of it—but I went on. It didn't check me. I ran past, tugging out my watch, found I had ten minutes still to spare, and then I was going downhill into familiar surroundings. I got to school, breathless, it is true, and wet with perspiration, but in time. I can remember hanging up my coat and hat. . . . Went right by it and left it behind me. Odd, eh?"

He looked at me thoughtfully. "Of course I didn't know then that it wouldn't always be there. Schoolboys have limited imaginations. I suppose I thought it was an awfully jolly thing to have it there, to know my way back to it, but there was the school tugging at me. I expect I was a good deal distraught and inattentive that morning, recalling what I could of the beautiful strange people I should presently see again. Oddly enough I had no doubt in my mind that they would be glad to see me. . . . Yes, I must have thought of the garden that morning just as a jolly sort of place to which one might resort in the interludes of a strenuous scholastic career.

"I didn't go that day at all. The next day was a half holiday, and that may have weighed with me. Perhaps, too, my state of inattention brought down impositions upon me, and docked the margin of time

necessary for the detour. I don't know. What I do know is that in the meantime the enchanted garden was so much upon my mind that I could not keep it to myself.

"I told. What was his name?—a ferrety-looking youngster we used to call Squiff."

"Young Hopkins," said I.

"Hopkins it was. I did not like telling him. I had a feeling that in some way it was against the rules to tell him, but I did. He was walking part of the way home with me; he was talkative, and if we had not talked about the enchanted garden we should have talked of something else, and it was intolerable to me to think about any other subject. So I blabbed.

"Well, he told my secret. The next day in the play interval I found myself surrounded by half a dozen bigger boys, half teasing, and wholly curious to hear more of the enchanted garden. There was that big Fawcett—you remember him?—and Carnaby and Morley Reynolds. You weren't there by any chance? No, I think I should have remembered if you were. . . .

"A boy is a creature of odd feelings. I was, I really believe, in spite of my secret self-disgust, a little flattered to have the attention of these big fellows. I remember particularly a moment of pleasure caused by the praise of Crawshaw—you remember Crawshaw major, the son of Crawshaw the composer?—who said it was the best lie he had ever heard. But at the same time there was a really painful undertow of shame at telling what I felt was indeed a sacred secret. That beast Fawcett made a joke about the girl in green——"

Wallace's voice sank with the keen memory of that shame. "I pretended not to hear," he said. "Well, then Carnaby suddenly called me a young liar, and disputed with me when I said the thing was true. I said I knew where to find the green door, could lead them all there in ten minutes. Carnaby became outrageously virtuous, and said I'd have to—and bear out my words or suffer. Did you ever have Carnaby twist your arm? Then perhaps you'll understand how it went with me. I swore my story was true. There was nobody in the school then to save a chap from Carnaby, though Crawshaw put in a word or so. Carnaby had got his game. I grew excited and red-eared, and a little frightened. I behaved altogether like a silly little chap, and the outcome of it all was that instead of starting alone for my enchanted garden, I led the way presently—cheeks flushed, ears hot, eyes smarting, and my soul one burning misery and shame—for a party of six mocking, curious, and threatening schoolfellows.

"We never found the white wall and the green door . . ."

"You mean——?"

"I mean I couldn't find it. I would have found it if I could.

"And afterwards when I could go alone I couldn't find it. I never found it. I seem now to have been always looking for it through my schoolboy days, but I never came upon it—never."

"Did the fellows—make it disagreeable?"

"Beastly. . . . Carnaby held a council over me for wanton lying. I remember how I sneaked home and upstairs to hide the marks of my blubbering. But when I cried myself to sleep at last it wasn't for Carnaby, but for the garden, for the beautiful afternoon I had hoped for, for the sweet friendly women and the waiting playfellows, and the game I had hoped to learn again, that beautiful forgotten game . . .

"I believed firmly that if I had not told. . . . I had bad times after that—crying at night and wool-gathering by day. For two terms I slackened and had bad reports. Do you remember? Of course you would! It was *you*—your beating me in mathematics that brought me back to the grind again."

III

FOR a time my friend stared silently into the red heart of the fire. Then he said: "I never saw it again until I was seventeen.

"It leapt upon me for the third time—as I was driving to Paddington on my way to Oxford and a scholarship I had just one momentary glimpse. I was leaning over the apron of my hansom smoking a cigarette, and no doubt thinking myself no end of a man of the world, and suddenly there was the door, the wall, the dear sense of unforgettable and still attainable things.

"We clattered by—I too taken by surprise to stop my cab until we were well past and round a corner. Then I had a

queer moment, a double and divergent movement of my will: I tapped the little door in the roof of the cab, and brought my arm down to pull out my watch. 'Yes, sir!' said the cabman, smartly. 'Er—well—it's nothing,' I cried. '*My* mistake! We haven't much time! Go on!' And he went on. . . .

"I got my scholarship. And the night after I was told of that I sat over my fire in my little upper room, my study, in my father's house, with his praise—his rare praise—and his sound counsels ringing in my ears, and I smoked my favourite pipe—the formidable bulldog of adolescence—and thought of that door in the long white wall. 'If I had stopped,' I thought, 'I should have missed my scholarship, I should have missed Oxford—muddled all the fine career before me! I began to see things better!' I fell musing deeply, but I did not doubt then this career of mine was a thing that merited sacrifice.

"Those dear friends and that clear atmosphere seemed very sweet to me, very fine but remote. My grip was fixing now upon the world. I saw another door opening—the door of my career."

He stared again into the fire. Its red light picked out a stubborn strength in his face for just one flickering moment, and then it vanished again.

"Well," he said and sighed, "I have served that career. I have done—much work, much hard work. But I have dreamt of the enchanted garden a thousand dreams, and seen its door, or at least glimpsed its door, four times since then. Yes—four times. For a while this world was so bright and interesting, seemed so full of meaning and opportunity, that the half-effaced charm of the garden was by comparison gentle and remote. Who wants to pat panthers on the way to dinner with pretty women and distinguished men? I came down to London from Oxford, a man of bold promise that I have done something to redeem. Something—and yet there have been disappointments. . . .

"Twice I have been in love—I will not dwell on that—but once, as I went to someone who, I knew, doubted whether I dared to come, I took a short cut at a venture through an unfrequented road near Earl's Court, and so happened on a white wall and a familiar green door. 'Odd!' said I to myself, 'but I thought this place was on Campden Hill. It's the place I never could find somehow—like counting Stonehenge—the place of that queer daydream of mine.' And I went by it intent upon my purpose. It had no appeal to me that afternoon.

"I had just a moment's impulse to try the door, three steps aside were needed at the most—though I was sure enough in my heart that it would open to me—and then I thought that doing so might delay me on the way to that appointment in which I thought my honour was involved. Afterwards I was sorry for my punctuality—I might at least have peeped in, I thought, and waved a hand to those panthers, but I knew enough by this time not to seek again belatedly that which is not found by seeking. Yes, that time made me very sorry. . . .

"Years of hard work after that, and never a sight of the door. It's only recently it has come back to me. With it there has come a sense as though some thin tarnish had spread itself over my world. I began to think of it as a sorrowful and bitter thing that I should never see that door again. Perhaps I was suffering a little from overwork—perhaps it was what I've heard spoken of as the feeling of forty. I don't know. But certainly the keen brightness that makes effort easy has gone out of things recently, and that just at a time—with all these new political developments—when I ought to be working. Odd, isn't it? But I do begin to find life toilsome, its rewards, as I come near them, cheap. I began a little while ago to want the garden quite badly. Yes—and I've seen it three times."

"The garden?"

"No—the door! And I haven't gone in!"

He leant over the table to me, with an enormous sorrow in his voice as he spoke. "Thrice I have had my chance—*thrice!* If ever that door offers itself to me again, I swore, I will go in, out of this dust and heat, out of this dry glitter of vanity, out of these toilsome futilities. I will go and never return. This time I will stay. . . . I swore it, and when the time came—*I didn't go.*

"Three times in one year have I passed that door and failed to enter. Three times in the last year.

"The first time was on the night of the snatch division on the Tenant's Redemption Bill, on which the Government was

saved by a majority of three. You remember? No one on our side—perhaps very few on the opposite side—expected the end that night. Then the debate collapsed like eggshells. I and Hotchkiss were dining with his cousin at Brentford; we were both unpaired, and we were called up by telephone, and set off at once in his cousin's motor. We got in barely in time, and on the way we passed my wall and door—livid in the moonlight, blotched with hot yellow as the glare of our lamps lit it, but unmistakable. 'My God!' cried I. 'What?' said Hotchkiss, 'Nothing!' I answered, and the moment passed.

"'I've made a great sacrifice,' I told the whip as I got in. 'They all have,' he said, and hurried by.

"I do not see how I could have done otherwise then. And the next occasion was as I rushed to my father's bedside to bid that stern old man farewell. Then, too, the claims of life were imperative. But the third time was different; it happened a week ago. It fills me with hot remorse to recall it. I was with Gurker and Ralphs—it's no secret now, you know, that I've had my talk with Gurker. We had been dining at Frobisher's, and the talk had become intimate between us. The question of my place in the reconstructed Ministry lay always just over the boundary of the discussion. Yes—yes. That's all settled. It needn't be talked about yet, but there's no reason to keep a secret from you. . . . Yes—thanks! thanks! But let me tell you my story.

"Then, on that night things were very much in the air. My position was a very delicate one. I was keenly anxious to get some definite word from Gurker, but was hampered by Ralphs's presence. I was using the best poser of my brain to keep that light and careless talk not too obviously directed to the point that concerned me. I had to. Ralphs's behaviour since has more than justified my caution. . . . Ralphs, I knew, would leave us beyond the Kensington High Street, and then I could surprise Gurker by a sudden frankness. One has sometimes to resort to these little devices. . . . And then it was that in the margin of my field of vision I became aware once more of the white wall, the green door before us down the road.

"We passed it talking. I passed it. I can still see the shadow of Gurker's marked profile, his opera hat tilted forward over his prominent nose, the many folds of his neck wrap going before my shadow and Ralphs's as we sauntered past.

"I passed within twenty inches of the door. 'If I say good-night to them, and go in,' I asked myself, 'what will happen?' And I was all a-tingle for that word with Gurker.

"I could not answer that question in the tangle of my other problems. 'They will think me mad,' I thought. 'And suppose I vanish now!—Amazing disappearance of a prominent politician!' That weighed with me. A thousand inconceivably petty worldlinesses weighed with me in that crisis."

Then he turned on me with a sorrowful smile, and, speaking slowly, "Here I am!" he said.

"Here I am!" he repeated, "and my chance has gone from me. Three times in one year the door has been offered me—the door that goes into peace, into delight, into a beauty beyond dreaming, a kindness no man on earth can know. And I have rejected it, Redmond, and it has gone——"

"How do you know?"

"I know. I know. I am left now to work it out, to stick to the tasks that held me so strongly when my moments came. You say I have success—this vulgar, tawdy, irksome, envied thing. I have it." He had a walnut in his big hand. "If that was my success," he said, and crushed it, and held it out for me to see.

"Let me tell you something, Redmond. This loss is destroying me. For two months, for ten weeks nearly now, I have done no work at all, except the most necessary and urgent duties. My soul is full of inappeasable regrets. At nights—when it is less likely I shall be recognized—I go out. I wander. Yes. I wonder what people would think of that if they knew. A Cabinet Minister, the responsible head of that most vital of all departments, wandering alone—grieving—sometimes near audibly lamenting—for a door, for a garden!"

IV

I CAN see now his rather pallid face, and the unfamiliar sombre fire that had come into his eyes. I see him very vividly tonight. I sit recalling his words, his tones,

and last evening's *Westminster Gazette* still lies on my sofa, containing the notice of his death. At lunch to-day the club was busy with his death. We talked of nothing else.

They found his body very early yesterday morning in a deep excavation near East Kensington Station. It is one of two shafts that have been made in connexion with an extension of the railway southward. It is protected from the intrusion of the public by a hoarding upon the high road, in which a small doorway has been cut for the convenience of some of the workmen who live in that direction. The doorway was left unfastened through a misunderstanding between two gangers, and through it he made his way. . . .

My mind is darkened with questions and riddles.

It would seem he walked all the way from the House that night—he has frequently walked home during the past Session—and so it is I figure his dark form coming along the late and empty streets, wrapped up, intent. And then did the pale electric lights near the station cheat the rough planking into a semblance of white? Did that fatal unfastened door awaken some memory?

Was there, after all, ever any green door in the wall at all?

I do not know. I have told his story as he told it to me. There are times when I believe that Wallace was no more than the victim of the coincidence between a rare but not unprecedented type of hallucination and a careless trap, but that indeed is not my profoundest belief. You may think me superstitious, if you will, and foolish; but, indeed, I am more than half convinced that he had, in truth, an abnormal gift, and a sense, something—I know not what—that in the guise of wall and door offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world. At any rate, you will say, it betrayed him in the end. But did it betray him? There you touch the inmost mystery of these dreamers, these men of vision and the imagination. We see our world fair and common, the hoarding and the pit. By our daylight standard he walked out of security into darkness, danger, and death.

But did he see like that?

FAITH in something is an absolute and vital essential to the life of every woman.—EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

TALK that does not end in any kind of action is better suppressed altogether.
—CARLYLE.

WE must despise no sort of talent; they all have their separate duties and uses; all, the happiness of man for their object; they all improve, exalt, and gladden life.—SYDNEY SMITH.

GOING by railroad I do not consider as travelling at all; it is merely being "sent" to a place, and very little different from becoming a parcel.—RUSKIN.

CITIES give us collision. 'Tis said London and New York take the nonsense out of a man.—EMERSON.

THERE is a peculiarity in the countenance, as everybody knows, which, though it cannot be described, is sure to betray the Englishman.—BORROW.

ENTHUSIASM is the genius of sincerity, and truth accomplishes no victories without it.—LORD LYTTON.

Pen-Pictures of the Sea

One of the Highest Kinds of Pleasure

OF all the objects I have ever seen, there is none which affects my imagination so much as the sea, or ocean. I cannot see the heavings of this prodigious bulk of waters, even in a calm, without a very pleasing astonishment; but when it is worked up in a tempest, so that the horizon on every side is nothing but foaming billows and floating mountains, it is impossible to describe the agreeable horror that rises from such a prospect. A troubled ocean to a man who sails upon it is, I think, the biggest object that he can see in motion, and consequently gives his imagination one of the highest kinds of pleasure that can arise from greatness. Joseph Addison.

ROLL on, thou deep and dark blue ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields
Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise
And shake him from thee: the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth:—there let him lay. Byron.

The Season for a Ship

NOW is the season for a ship to run through the gurgling water, and no longer does the sea gloom, fretted with gusty squalls; and now the swallow plasters his round houses under the eaves, and the soft leafage laughs in the meadows. Therefore wind up your soaked cables, O sailors, and weigh your hidden anchors from the harbours, and stretch the forestays to carry your well-woven sails. This I, the son of Bromius, bid you, Priapus of the Anchorage. Antipater of Sidon.

O TO sail in a ship,
To leave this steady unendurable land,
To leave the tiresome sameness of the streets, the sidewalks and the houses,
To leave you, O you solid motionless land, and entering a ship,
To sail and sail and sail! Walt Whitman.

A Wide Sea Voyage

IN travelling by land, there is a continuity of scene, and a connective succession of persons and incidents, that carry on the story of life, and lessen the effect of absence and separation. We drag, it is true, a "lengthening chain" at each remove of our pilgrimage; but the chain is unbroken; we can trace it back link by link, and we feel that the last still grapples us to home. But a wide sea voyage severs us at once. It makes us conscious of being cast loose from the secure anchorage of settled life, and sent adrift upon a doubtful world. It interposes a gulf, not merely imaginary, but real, between us and our homes—a gulf subject to tempest, and fear, and uncertainty, rendering distance palpable, and return precarious. Washington Irving.

SEA! girt with tempest and winged with thunder,
And clad with lightning and shod with sleet,
The strong winds treading the swift waves sunder
The flying rollers with frothy feet.
One gleam like a bloodshot sword-blade swims on
The skyline, staining the green gulf crimson,
A death-stroke fiercely dealt by a dim sun,
That strikes through his stormy winding-sheet.

Oh! brave white horses! you gather and gallop,
The storm-sprite loosens the gusty reins;
Now the stoutest ship were the frailest shallop
In your hollow backs, or your high arched manes.
I would ride as never a man has ridden
In your sleepy, swirling surges hidden,
To gulfs foreshadowed through straits forbidden,
Where no light wearies and no love wanes.

Adam Lindsay Gordon.

David Copperfield Watches the Storm

THE tremendous sea itself, when I could find sufficient pause to look at it, in the agitation of the blinding wind, the flying stones and sand, and the awful noise, confounded me. As the high watery walls came rolling in, and, at their highest, tumbled into surf, they looked as if the least would engulf the town. As the receding wave swept back with a hoarse roar, it seemed to scoop out deep caves in the beach, as if its purpose were to undermine the earth. When some white-headed billows thundered on, and dashed themselves to pieces before they reached the land, every fragment of the late whole seemed possessed by the full might of its wrath, rushing to be gathered to the composition of another monster. Undulating hills were changed to valleys, undulating valleys (with a solitary storm-bird sometimes skimming through them) were lifted up to the hills; masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound; every shape tumultuously rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away; the ideal shore on the horizon, with its towers and buildings, rose and fell; the clouds flew fast and thick; I seemed to see a rending and upheaving of all nature.

Charles Dickens.

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Madame Bo-Peep of the Ranches

Pride, and a little mistake that chance corrected

By O. HENRY

"AUNT ELLEN," said Octavia cheerfully, as she threw her black kid gloves carefully at the dignified Persian cat on the window-seat, "I'm a pauper."

"You are so extreme in you statements, Octavia dear," said Aunt Ellen mildly, looking up from her paper. "If you find yourself temporarily in need of some small change for chocolates, you will find my purse in the drawer of the writing-desk."

Octavia Beaupree removed her hat and seated herself on a footstool near her aunt's chair, clasping her hands about her knees. Her slim and flexible figure, clad in a modish mourning costume, accommodated itself easily and gracefully to the trying position. Her bright and youthful face, with its pair of sparkling, life-enamoured eyes, tried to compose itself to the seriousness the occasion demanded.

"You good auntie, it isn't a case of bon-bons; it is abject, staring, unpicturesque poverty, with ready-made clothes, cleaned gloves, and probably one o'clock dinners all waiting with the traditional wolf at the door. I've just come from my lawyer, auntie, and, 'Please, ma'am, I ain't got nothink 't all. Flowers, lady? Buttonhole, gentleman? Pencils, sir, three a penny, to help a poor widow?' Do I do it nicely, auntie, or, as a bread-winner accomplishment, were my lessons in elocution entirely wasted?"

"Do be serious, my dear," said Aunt Ellen, letting her paper fall to the floor, "long enough to tell me what you mean. Colonel Beaupree's estate——"

"Colonel Beaupree's estate," interrupted Octavia, emphasizing her words with appropriate dramatic gestures "is of Spanish castellar architecture. Colonel Beaupree's resources are—wind. Colonel Beaupree's stocks are—water. Colonel Beaupree's income is—done in. The statement lacks the legal technicalities to which I have been listening for an hour, but that is what it means when translated."

"Octavia!" Aunt Ellen was now visibly possessed by consternation. "I can hardly believe it. And it was the impression that he was worth a million. And the De Peysters themselves introduced him!"

Octavia rippled out a laugh, and then became properly grave.

"*De mortuis nil*, auntie—not even the rest of it. The dear old colonel—what a gold brick he was, after all! I paid for my bargain fairly—I'm all here, am I not?—items: eyes, fingers, toes, youth, old family, unquestionable position in society as called for in the contract—no wild-cat stock here." Octavia picked up the morning paper from the floor. "But I'm not to going 'squeal'—isn't that what they call it when you rail at Fortune because you've lost the game?" She turned the pages of the paper calmly. "'Stock market'—no use for that. 'Society's doings'—that's done with. Here is my page—the 'Wants' column. A Van Dresser could not be said to 'want' for anything, of course. 'Chambermaids, cooks, canvassers, secretaries.'"

"Dear," said Aunt Ellen, with a little tremor in her voice, "please do not talk in that way. Even if your affairs are in so unfortunate a condition, there is my three hundred——"

Octavia sprang up lithely and deposited a smart kiss on the delicate cheek of the prim little elderly maid.

"Blessed auntie, your three hundred is just sufficient to insure your having enough to eat and keep the Persian in sterilized cream. I know I'd be welcome, but I prefer to strike bottom like Beelzebub rather than hang around like the Peri listening to the music from the side entrance.

I'm going to earn my own living. There's nothing else to do. I'm a—oh, oh, oh! I had forgotten. There's one thing saved from the wreck. It's a corral—no, a ranch in—let me see—out in Texas: an asset, dear old Mr. Bannister called it. How pleased he was to show me something he could describe as unencumbered! I've a description of it among those stupid papers he made me bring away with me from his office. I'll try to find it."

Octavia found her shopping bag, and drew from it a long envelope filled with typewritten documents.

"A ranch in Texas," sighed Aunt Ellen. "It sounds to me more like a liability than an asset. Those are the places where the centipedes are found, and cowboys and fandangos."

"The Rancho de las Sombras," read Octavia from a sheet of violently purple typewriting, "is situated close upon forty-five miles from its nearest railroad station, Nopal, on the I. and G.N. Ranch consists of 7,680 acres of well-watered land, with title conferred by State patents, and twenty-two sections, or 14,080 acres, partly under yearly running lease and partly bought under State's twenty-year-purchase act. Eight thousand graded merino sheep, with the necessary equipment of horses, vehicles and general ranch paraphernalia. Ranch house built of brick, with six rooms comfortably furnished according to the requirements of the climate. All within a strong barbed-wire fence.

"The present ranch manager seems to be competent and reliable, and is rapidly placing upon a paying basis a business that, in other hands, had been allowed to suffer from neglect and misconduct.

"This property was secured by Colonel Beaupree in a deal with an American irrigation syndicate, and the title to it seems to be perfect. With careful management and the natural increase of land values it ought to be made the foundation for a comfortable fortune to its owner."

When Octavia ceased reading, Aunt Ellen uttered something as near a sniff as her breeding permitted.

"The prospectus," she said, with uncompromising metropolitan suspicion, "doesn't mention the centipedes, or the Indians. And you never did like mutton, Octavia. I don't see what advantage you can derive from this—desert."

But Octavia was in a trance. Her eyes were steadily regarding something quite beyond their focus. Her lips were parted, and her face was lighted by the kindling *furor* of the explorer, the ardent, stirring disquiet of the adventurer. Suddenly she clasped her hands together exultantly.

"The problem solves itself, auntie," she cried. "I'm going to that ranch. I'm going to live on it. I'm going to learn to like mutton, and even concede the good qualities of centipedes—at a respectful distance. It's just what I need. It's a new life that comes when my old one is just ending. It's a release, auntie; it isn't a narrowing. Think of the gallops over those leagues of prairies, with the wind tugging at the roots of your hair, the coming close to the earth and learning over again the stories of the growing grass and the little wild flowers without names! Glorious is what it will be. Shall I be a shepherdess with a Watteau hat, and a crook to keep the bad wolves from the lambs, or a typical Western ranch girl, with short hair, like the pictures of her on the cinematograph? I think the latter. And they'll have my picture, too, with the wild-cats I've slain, single-handed, hanging from my saddle horn. 'From Mayfair to the Muttons' is the way they'll headline it, and they'll print photographs of the Van Dresser town house and the church where I was married. They won't have my picture, but they'll get an artist to draw it. I'll be wild and woolly, and I'll grow my own wool."

"Octavia!" Aunt Ellen condensed into one word all the protests she was unable to utter.

"Don't say a word, auntie. I'm going. I'll see the sky at night shut down on the world like a big butter-dish cover, and I'll make friends again with the stars that I haven't had a chat with since I was a wee child. I wish to go. I'm tired of all this. I'm glad I haven't any money. I could bless Colonel Beaupree for that ranch and forgive him for all his bubbles. What if the life will be rough and lonely? I—I deserve it. I shut my heart to everything except that miserable ambition. I—oh, I wish to go away and forget—forget!"

Octavia swerved suddenly to her knees, laid her flushed face in her aunt's lap, and shook with turbulent sobs.

Aunt Ellen bent over her and smoothed the coppery-brown hair.

"I didn't know," she said gently; "I didn't know that. Who was it, dear?"

Madame Bo-Peep of the Ranches

WHEN Mrs. Octavia Beaupree, *née* Van Dresser, stepped from the train at Nopal, her manner lost, for the moment, some of that easy certitude which had always marked her movements. The town was of recent establishment, and seemed to have been hastily constructed of undressed lumber and flapping canvas. The element that had congregated about the station, though not offensively demonstrative, was clearly composed of citizens accustomed to and prepared for rude alarms.

Octavia stood on the platform, against the telegraph office, and attempted to choose by intuition from the swaggering, straggling string of loungers, the manager of the Rancho de las Sombras, who had been instructed by Mr. Bannister to meet her there. That tall, serious-looking, elderly man in the blue flannel shirt and white tie she thought must be he. But, no; he passed by, removing his gaze from the lady as hers rested on him, according to the Southern custom. The manager, she thought, with some impatience at being kept waiting, should have no difficulty in selecting her. Young women wearing the most recent thing in ash-coloured travelling costumes were not so plentiful in Nopal!

Thus keeping a speculative watch on all persons of possible managerial aspect, Octavia, with a catching breath and a start of surprise, suddenly became aware of Teddy Westlake hurrying along the platform in the direction of the train—of Teddy Westlake or his sun-browned ghost in cheviot boots and leather-girdled hat—Theodore Westlake, ex-Guardsman, amateur polo (almost) champion, all-round butterfly and cumberer of the soil—but a broader, surer, more emphasized and determined Teddy than the one she had known a year ago when last she saw him.

He perceived Octavia at almost the same time, deflected his course, and steered for her in his old, straightforward way. Something like awe came upon her as the strangeness of his metamorphosis was brought into closer range; the rich, red-brown of his complexion brought out so vividly his straw-coloured moustache and steel-grey eyes. He seemed more grown up, and, somehow, farther away. But, when he spoke, the old, boyish Teddy came back again. They had been friends from childhood.

"Why, 'Tave!" he exclaimed, unable to reduce his perplexity to coherence; "how—what—when—where?"

"Train," said Octavia; "necessity; ten minutes ago; home. Your complexion's gone, Teddy. Now, how—what—when—where?"

"I'm working down here," said Teddy. He cast side-glances about the station, as one does who tries to combine politeness with duty.

"You didn't notice on the train," he asked, "an old lady with grey curls and a poodle, who occupied two seats with her bundles and quarrelled with the conductor, did you?"

"I think not," answered Octavia, reflecting. "And you haven't, by any chance, noticed a big, grey-moustached man in a blue shirt and six-shooters, with little flakes of merino wool sticking in his hair, have you?"

"Lots of 'em," said Teddy, with symptoms of mental delirium under the strain. "Do you happen to know any such individual?"

"No; the description is imaginary. Is your interest in the old lady whom you describe a personal one?"

"Never saw her in my life. She's painted entirely from fancy. She owns the little piece of property where I earn my bread and butter—the Rancho de las Sombras. I drove up to meet her according to arrangement with her lawyer."

Octavia leaned against the wall of the telegraph office. Was this possible? And didn't he know?

"Are you the manager of that ranch?" she asked weakly.

"I am," said Teddy, with pride.

"I am Mrs. Beaupree," said Octavia faintly; "but my hair never would curl, and I was polite to the conductor."

For a moment that strange, grown-up look came back and removed Teddy miles away from her.

"I hope you'll excuse me," he said rather awkwardly. "You see, I've been down here in the chaparral a year. I hadn't heard. Give me your tickets, please, and I'll have your traps loaded into the wagon. José will follow with them. We travel ahead in the buckboard."

Seated by Teddy in a feather-weight buckboard, behind a pair of wild, cream-coloured Spanish ponies, Octavia abandoned all thought for the exhilaration of the present. They swept out of the little town and down

the level road towards the south. Soon the road dwindled and disappeared, and they struck across a world carpeted with an endless reach of curly mesquite grass. The wheels made no sound. The tireless ponies bounded ahead at an unbroken gallop. The temperate wind, made fragrant by thousands of acres of blue and yellow wild flowers, roared gloriously in their ears. The motion was aerial, ecstatic, with a thrilling sense of perpetuity in its effect. Octavia sat silent, possessed by a feeling of elemental sensual bliss. Teddy seemed to be wrestling with some internal problem.

"I'm going to call you madama," he announced, as the result of his labours. "That is what the Mexicans will call you —they're nearly all Mexicans on the ranch, you know. That seems to me about the proper thing."

"Very well, Mr. Westlake," said Octavia primly.

"Oh, now," said Teddy, in some consternation, "that's carrying the thing too far, isn't it?"

"Don't worry me with your beastly etiquette. I'm just beginning to live. Don't remind me of anything artificial. If only this air could be bottled! This much alone is worth coming for. Oh, look, there goes a deer!"

"Jack rabbit," said Teddy, without turning his head.

"Could I—might I drive?" suggested Octavia, panting, with rose-tinted cheeks and the eye of an eager child.

"On one condition. Could I—might I smoke?"

"For ever!" cried Octavia, taking the lines with solemn joy. "How shall I know which way to drive?"

"Keep her sou' by sou'-east, and all sail set. You see that black speck on the horizon under that lowermost Gulf cloud? That's a group of live-oaks and a landmark. Steer half way between that and the little hill to the left. I'll recite you the whole code of driving rules for the Texas prairies: keep the reins from under the horses' feet and swear at 'em frequent."

"I'm too happy to swear, Ted. Oh, why do you people buy yachts or travel in motor-cars, when a buckboard and a pair of plugs and a spring morning like this can satisfy all desire?"

"Now, I'll ask you," protested Teddy, who was futilely striking match after match on the dashboard, "not to call those denizens of the air plugs. They can kick out a hundred miles between daylight and dark." At last he succeeded in snatching a light for his cigar from the flame held in the hollow of his hands.

"Room!" said Octavia intensely. "That's what produces the effect. I know now what I've wanted—scope—range—room!"

"Smoking-room," said Teddy unsentimentally. "I love to smoke in a buckboard. The wind blows the smoke into you and out again. It saves exertion."

The two fell so naturally into their old-time good-fellowship that it was only by degrees that a sense of the strangeness of the new relations between them came to be felt.

"Madama," said Teddy wonderingly, "however did you get it into your head to cut the crowd and come down here? Is it a fad now among the upper classes to trot off to sheep ranches instead of to the Riviera or Egypt?"

"I was broke, Teddy," said Octavia sweetly, with her interest centred upon steering safely between a Spanish dagger plant and a clump of chaparral; "I haven't a thing in the world but this ranch—not even any other home to go to."

"Come, now," said Teddy anxiously but incredulously, "you don't mean it?"

"When my husband," said Octavia, with a shy slurring of the word, "died three months ago, I thought I had a reasonable amount of the world's goods. His lawyer exploded that theory in a sixty-minute fully illustrated lecture. I took to the sheep as a last resort. Do you happen to know of any fashionable caprice among the gilded youth of Mayfair that induces them to abandon polo and club windows to become managers of sheep ranches?"

"It's easily explained in my case," responded Teddy promptly. "I had to go to work. I couldn't have earned my board in London, so I chummed a while with old Sandford, one of the syndicate that owned the ranch before Colonel Beaupree bought it, and got a place down here. I wasn't manager at first. I jogged around on ponies and studied the business in detail, until I got all the points in my head. I saw where it was losing and what the remedies were, and then Sandford put me in charge. I get a hundred dollars a month, and I earn it."

"Poor Teddy!" said Octavia with a smile.

"You needn't. I like it. I save half my wages, and I'm as tough as wire. It beats polo."

"Will it furnish bread and tea and jam for another outcast from civilization?"

"The spring shearing," said the manager, "just cleaned up a deficit in last year's business. Wastefulness and inattention have been the rule heretofore. The autumn clip will leave a small profit over all expenses. Next year there will be jam."

When, about four o'clock in the afternoon, the ponies rounded a gentle, brush-covered hill, and then swooped, like a double cream-coloured cyclone, upon the Rancho de las Sombras, Octavia gave a little cry of delight. A lordly grove of magnificent live oaks cast an area of grateful cool shade, whence the ranch had drawn its name, "de las Sombras"—of the shadows. The house, of red brick, one story, ran low and long beneath the trees. Through its middle, dividing its six rooms in halves, extended a broad arched passageway, picturesque with flowering cactus and hanging red earthen jars. A "gallery," low and broad, encircled the building. Vines climbed about it, and the adjacent ground was, for a space, covered with transplanted grass and shrubs. A little lake, long and narrow, glimmered in the sun at the rear. Farther away stood the shacks of the Mexican workers, the corrals, wool sheds and shearing pens. To the right lay the low hills, splattered with dark patches of chaparral; to the left the unbounded green prairie blending against the blue heavens.

"It's a home, Teddy," said Octavia breathlessly; "that's what it is—it's a home."

"Not so bad for a sheep ranch," admitted Teddy, with excusable pride. "I've been tinkering on it at odd times."

A Mexican youth sprang from somewhere in the grass and took charge of the creams. The two entered the house.

"Here's Mrs. MacIntyre," said Teddy, as a placid, neat, elderly lady came out upon the gallery to meet them. "Mrs. Mac, here's the boss. Very likely she will be wanting a hunk of bacon and a dish of beans after her drive."

Mrs. MacIntyre, the housekeeper, as much a fixture on the place as the lake or the live oaks, received the imputation of the ranch's sources of refreshment with mild indignation, and was about to give it utterance when Octavia spoke.

"Oh, Mrs. MacIntyre, don't apologize for Teddy. Yes, I call him Teddy. So does everyone whom he hasn't duped into taking him seriously. You see, we used to cut paper dolls and play Indians together ages ago. No one minds what he says."

"No," said Teddy, "no one minds what he says, so long as he doesn't do it again."

Octavia cast one of those subtle, sidelong glances towards him from beneath her lowered eyelids—a glance that Teddy used to describe as an upper-cut. But there was nothing in his ingenuous, weather-tanned face to warrant a suspicion that he was making an allusion—nothing. Beyond a doubt, thought Octavia, he had forgotten.

"Mr. Westlake likes his fun," said Mrs. MacIntyre, as she conducted Octavia to her rooms. "But," she added loyally, "people around here usually pay attention to what he says when he talks in earnest. I don't know what would have become of this place without him."

¶

TWO rooms at the east end of the house had been arranged for the occupancy of the ranch's mistress. When she entered them a slight dismay seized her at their bare appearance and the scantiness of their furniture; but she quickly reflected that the climate was a semi-tropical one, and was moved to appreciation of the well-conceived efforts to conform to it. The sashes had already been removed from the big windows, and white curtains waved in the Gulf breeze that streamed through the wide jalousies. The bare floor was amply strewn with cool rugs; the chairs were inviting, deep, dreamy willows; the walls were papered with a light cheerful olive. One whole side of her sitting-room was covered with books on smooth, unpainted pine shelves. She flew to these at once. Before her was a well-selected library. She caught glimpses of titles of volumes of fiction and travel.

Presently, recollecting that she was now in a wilderness given over to mutton, centipedes and privations, the incongruity of these luxuries struck her, and, with intuitive feminine suspicion, she began turning to the fly-leaves of volume after volume. Upon each one was inscribed the name of Theodore Westlake.

Octavia, fatigued by her long journey, retired early that night. Lying upon her white, cool bed, she rested deliciously, but sleep coquetted long with her. She listened to faint noises, whose strangeness kept her faculties on the alert—the fractious yelping of the coyotes, the ceaseless, low symphony of the wind, the distant booming of the frogs about the lake, the lamentation of a concertina in the Mexicans' quarters. There were many conflicting feelings in her heart—thankfulness and rebellion, peace and disquietude, loneliness and a sense of protecting care, happiness and an old, haunting pain.

She did what any other woman would have done—sought relief in a wholesome tide of unreasonable tears, and her last words, murmured to herself before slumber, capitulating, came softly to woo her, were: "He has forgotten."

The manager of the Rancho de las Sombras was no dilettante. He was a "hustler." He was generally up, mounted, and away of mornings before the rest of the household were awake, making the rounds of the flocks and camps. This was the duty of the major-domo, a stately old Mexican with a princely air and manner, but Teddy seemed to have a great deal of confidence in his own eyesight. Except in the busy seasons, he nearly always returned to the ranch to breakfast at eight o'clock, with Octavia and Mrs. MacIntyre, at the little table set in the central hall-way, bringing with him a tonic and breezy cheerfulness full of the health and flavour of the prairies.

A few days after Octavia's arrival he made her get out one of her riding-skirts, and curtail it to a shortness demanded by the chaparral brakes.

With some misgivings she donned this and the pair of buckskin leggings he prescribed in addition, and, mounted upon a dancing pony, rode with him to view her possessions. He showed her everything—the flocks of ewes, muttons and grazing lambs, the dipping vats, the shearing pens, the uncouth merino rams in their little pasture, the water tanks, prepared against the summer drought—giving account of his stewardship with an unflagging boyish enthusiasm.

Where was the old Teddy that she knew so well? This side of him was the same, and it was a side that pleased her; but this was all she ever saw of him now. Where was his sentimentality—those old, varying moods of impetuous love-making, of fanciful, quixotic devotion, of heart-breaking gloom, of alternating, absurd tenderness and haughty dignity? His nature had been a sensitive one, his temperament bordering closely on the artistic. She knew that, besides being a follower of fashion and its fads and sports, he had cultivated tastes of a finer nature. He had written things, he had tampered with colours, he was something of a student in certain branches of art, and once she had been admitted to all his aspirations and thoughts. But now—and she could not avoid the conclusion—Teddy had barricaded against her every side of himself except one—the side that showed the manager of the Rancho de las Sombras and a jolly chum who had forgiven and forgotten. Queerly enough, the words of Mr. Bannister's description of her property came to her mind; "all enclosed within a strong barbed-wire fence."

"Teddy's fenced, too," said Octavia to herself.

It was not difficult for her to reason out the cause of his fortifications. It had originated one night at the Hammersmiths' ball. It occurred at a time soon after she had decided to accept Colonel Beaupree and his million, which was no more than her looks and the *entrée* she held to the inner circles were worth. Teddy had proposed with all his impetuosity and fire, and she looked him straight in the eye and said, coldly and finally: "Never let me hear any such silly nonsense from you again." "You won't," said Teddy, with a new expression around his mouth, and—now Teddy was enclosed within a strong barbed-wire fence.

It was on this first ride of inspection that Teddy was seized by the inspiration that suggested the name of Mother Goose's heroine, and he at once bestowed it upon Octavia. The idea, supported by both a similarity of names and identity of occupations, seemed to strike him as a peculiarly happy one, and he never tired of using it. The Mexicans on the ranch also took up the name, adding another syllable to accommodate their lingual incapacity for the final "p," gravely referring to her as "La Madama Bo-Peepy." Eventually it spread, and "Madame Bo-Peep's Ranch" was as often mentioned as the "Rancho de las Sombras."

Came the long, hot season from May to September, when work is scarce on the

ranches. Octavia passed the days in a kind of lotus-eater's dream. Books, hammocks, correspondence with a few intimate friends, a renewed interest in her old water-colour box and easel—these disposed of the sultry hours of daylight. The evenings were always sure to bring enjoyment. Best of all were the rapturous horseback rides with Teddy, when the moon gave light over the wind-swept leagues, chaperoned by the wheeling night-hawk and the startled owl. Often the Mexicans would come up from their shacks with their guitars and sing the weirdest of heart-breaking songs. There were long, cosy chats on the breezy gallery, and an interminable warfare of wits between Teddy and Mrs. MacIntyre, whose abundant Scotch shrewdness often overmatched the lighter humour which she lacked.

And the nights came one after another, and were filed away by weeks and months —nights soft and languorous and fragrant that should have driven Strephon to Chloe over wires however barbed, and might have drawn Cupid himself to hunt, lasso in hand, among those amorous pastures, but Teddy kept his fences up.

¶

ONE July night Madame Bo-Peep and her ranch manager were sitting on the east gallery. Teddy had been exhausting the science of prognostication as to the probabilities of a price of twenty-four cents for the autumn clip, and had then subsided into an anæsthetic cloud of Havana smoke. Only as incompetent a judge as a woman would have failed to note long ago that at least a third of his salary must have gone up in the fumes of those imported Regalias.

"Teddy," said Octavia suddenly and rather sharply, "what are you working down here on a ranch for?"

"One hundred dollars a month," said Teddy glibly, "and all found."

"I've a good mind to discharge you."

"Can't do it," said Teddy with a grin.

"Why not?" demanded Octavia.

"Under contract. Terms of sale respect all unexpired contracts. Mine runs until 12 p.m., December thirty-first. You might get up at midnight on that date and fire me. If you try sooner I'll be in a position to bring legal proceedings."

Octavia seemed to be considering the prospects of litigation.

"But," continued Teddy cheerfully, "I've been thinking of resigning anyway."

Octavia's rocking-chair ceased its motion. There were centipedes in this country, she felt sure, and Indians, and vast, lonely, desolate empty wastes—all within strong barbed-wire fences. There was a Van Dresser pride, but there was a Van Dresser heart. She must know for certain whether or not he had forgotten.

"Ah, well, Teddy," she said with a fine assumption of polite interest, "it's lonely down here; you're longing to get back to the old life—to polo and theatre suppers, and the opera and dances."

"Never cared much for dances," said Teddy virtuously.

"You're getting old, Teddy. Your memory is failing. Nobody ever knew you to miss a dance, unless it occurred on the same night with another one which you attended. And you showed such shocking bad taste, too, in dancing too often with the same partner. Let me see, what was that Forbes girl's name—the one with wall eyes—Mabel, wasn't it?"

"No, Adéle. Mabel was the one with the bony elbows. That wasn't wall in Adéle's eyes, it was soul. We used to talk sonnets together and Verlaine. Just then I was trying a pipe from the Pierian spring."

"You were on the floor with her," said Octavia undeflected, "five times at the Hammersmiths'."

"Hammersmiths' what?" questioned Teddy vacuously.

"Dance—dance," said Octavia viciously. "What were we talking of?"

"Eyes, I thought," said Teddy after some reflection, "and elbows."

"Those Hammersmiths," went on Octavia in her sweetest society prattle, after subduing an intense desire to yank a handful of sunburnt, sandy hair from the head lying back contentedly against the canvas of the steamer chair, "had too much money. Mines, wasn't it? It was something that paid something to the ton. You couldn't get a glass of plain water in their house. Everything at that dance was dreadfully overdone."

"It was," said Teddy.

"Such a crowd there was!" Octavia continued, conscious that she was talking the rapid drivel of a schoolgirl describing her first dance. "The balconies were as warm as the rooms. I—lost—something at that ball." The last sentence was uttered in a tone calculated to remove the barbs from miles of wire.

" So did I," confessed Teddy in a lower voice.

" A glove," said Octavia, falling back as the enemy approached her ditches.

" Caste," said Teddy, halting his firing-line without loss. " I hob-nobbed half the evening with one of Hammersmiths' miners, a fellow who kept his hands in his pockets and talked like an archangel about reduction plants and drifts and levels and sluice-boxes."

" A pearl-grey glove, nearly new," sighed Octavia mournfully.

" A bang-up chap, that McArdle," maintained Teddy approvingly. " A man who hated olives and lifts ; a man who handled mountains as croquettes, and built tunnels in the air ; a man who never uttered a word of silly nonsense in his life. Did you sign those lease-renewal applications yet, madama ? They've got to be on the file in the land office by the thirty-first."

Teddy turned his head lazily. Octavia's chair was vacant.

A certain centipede, crawling along the lines marked out by fate, expounded the situation. It was early one morning while Octavia and Mrs. MacIntyre were trimming the honeysuckle on the west gallery. Teddy had risen and departed hastily before daylight in response to word that a flock of ewes had been scattered from their bedding ground during the night by a thunderstorm.

The centipede, driven by destiny, showed himself on the floor of the gallery, and then, the screeches of the two women giving him his cue, he scuttled with all his yellow legs through the open door into the furthermost west room, which was Teddy's. Arming themselves with domestic utensils selected with regard to their length, Octavia and Mrs. MacIntyre, with much clutching of skirts and skirmishing for the position of rear guard in the attacking force, followed.

Once inside, the centipede seemed to have disappeared, and his prospective murderers began a thorough but cautious search for their victim.

Even in the midst of such a dangerous and absorbing adventure Octavia was conscious of an awed curiosity on finding herself in Teddy's sanctum. In that room he sat alone, silently communing with those secret thoughts that he now shared with no one, dreamed there whatever dreams he now called on no one to interpret.

It was the room of a Spartan or a soldier. In one corner stood a wide, canvas-covered cot, in another a small bookcase, in another a grim stand of Winchesters and shotguns. An immense table, strewn with letters, papers and documents, and surmounted by a set of pigeon-holes, occupied one side.

The centipede showed genius in concealing himself in such bare quarters. Mrs. MacIntyre was poking a broom-handle behind the bookcase. Octavia approached Teddy's cot. The room was just as the manager had left it in his hurry. The Mexican maid had not yet given it her attention. There was his big pillow, with the imprint of his head still in the centre. She thought the horrid beast might have climbed the cot and hidden itself to bite Teddy.

Centipedes were thus cruel and vindictive towards managers.

She cautiously overturned the pillow, and then parted her lips to give the signal for reinforcements at sight of a long, slender, dark object lying there. But, repressing it in time, she caught up a glove, a pearl-grey glove, flattened—it might be conceived—by many, many months of nightly pressure beneath the pillow of the man who had forgotten the Hammersmiths' ball. Teddy must have left so hurriedly that morning that he had, for once, forgotten to transfer it to its resting-place by day. Even managers, who are notoriously wily and cunning, are sometimes caught up with.

Octavia slid the grey glove into the bosom of her summery morning gown. It was hers. Men who put themselves within a strong barbed-wired fence, and remember Hammersmiths' balls only by the talk of miners about sluice-boxes, should not be allowed to possess such articles.

After all, what a Paradise this prairie country was ! How it blossomed like the rose when you found things that were thought to be lost ! How delicious was that morning breeze coming in at the windows, fresh and sweet with the breath of the yellow ratama blooms ! Might one not stand, for a minute, with shining, far-gazing eyes, and dream that mistakes might be corrected ?

Why was Mrs. MacIntyre poking about so absurdly with a broom ?

" I've found it ! " said Mrs. MacIntyre, banging the door. " Here it is ! "

" Did you lose something ? " asked Octavia, with sweetly polite non-interest.

" The little devil ! " said Mrs. MacIntyre,

driven to violence. "Ye've no forgotten him alretty?"

Between them they slew the centipede. Thus was he rewarded for his agency towards the recovery of things lost at the Hammersmiths' ball.

It seems that Teddy, in due course, remembered the glove, and when he returned to the house at sunset made a secret but exhaustive search for it. Not until evening, upon the moonlit eastern gallery, did he find it. It was upon the hand he had thought lost to him for ever, and so he was moved to repeat certain nonsense that he had been commanded never, never to utter again. Teddy's fences were down.

This time there was no ambition to stand in the way, and the wooing was as natural and successful as should be between ardent shepherd and gentle shepherdess.

The prairies changed to a garden. The Rancho de las Sombras became a ranch of light.

A few days later Octavia received a letter from Mr. Bannister, in reply to one she had written to him asking some questions about her business. A portion of the letter ran as follows:

"I am at a loss to account for your references to the sheep ranch. Two months after your departure to take up your residence upon it, it was discovered that Colonel Beaupree's title was worthless. A deed came to light showing that he disposed of the property before his death. The matter was reported to your manager, Mr. Westlake, who at once purchased the property. It is entirely beyond my powers of conjecture to imagine how you have remained in ignorance of this fact. I beg that you will at once confer with that gentleman, who will at least corroborate my statement."

Octavia sought Teddy with battle in her eye.

"What are you working on this ranch for?" she asked once more.

"One hundred——" he began to repeat, but saw in her face that she knew. She held Mr. Bannister's letter in her hand. He knew that the game was up.

"It's my ranch," said Teddy, like a schoolboy detected in evil. "It's a mighty poor manager that isn't able to absorb the boss's business, if you give him time."

"Why were you working down here?" pursued Octavia, still struggling after the key to the riddle of Teddy.

"To tell the truth, 'Tave," said Teddy, with quiet candour, "it wasn't for the salary. That about kept me in cigars and sunburn lotions. I was sent here by my doctor. 'Twas that right lung that was going to the bad on account of over-exercise and strain at polo and gymnastics. I needed climate and ozone and rest and things of that sort."

In an instant Octavia was close against the vicinity of the affected organ. Mr. Bannister's letter fluttered to the floor.

"It's—it's well now, isn't it, Teddy?"

"Sound as a mesquite chunk. I deceived you in one thing. I paid ten thousand pounds for your ranch as soon as I found you had no title. I had just about that much income accumulated at my banker's while I've been herding sheep down here, so it was almost like picking the thing up on a bargain-counter for a penny. There's another little surplus of unearned increment piling up there, 'Tave. I've been thinking of a wedding trip in a yacht with white ribbons tied to the mast, through the Mediterranean, and then up among the Hebrides and down Norway to the Zuyder Zee."

"And I was thinking," said Octavia softly, "of a wedding gallop with my manager among the flocks of sheep and back to a wedding breakfast with Mrs. MacIntyre on the gallery, with, maybe, a sprig of orange blossom fastened to the red jar above the table."

Teddy laughed and began to chant:

"Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep,
And doesn't know where to find 'em.
Let 'em alone, and they'll come home,
And——"

Octavia drew his head down, and whispered in his ear.

But that is one of the tales they brought behind them.

A Terribly Strange Bed

I believe this remarkable tale of a hairbreadth escape to be one of the finest of its kind, and certainly the best example of the vein of mystery peculiar to its author.—ED.

By WILKIE COLLINS

SHORTLY after my education at college was finished, I happened to be staying at Paris with an English friend. We were both young men then, and lived, I am afraid, rather a wild life, in the delightful city of our sojourn. One night we were idling about the neighbourhood of the Palais Royal, doubtful as to what amusement we should next betake ourselves. My friend proposed a visit to Frascati's; but his suggestion was not to my taste. I knew Frascati's, as the French saying is, by heart; had lost and won plenty of five-franc pieces there, merely for amusement's sake, until it was amusement no longer, and was thoroughly tired, in fact, of all the ghastly respectabilities of such a social anomaly as a respectable gambling-house. "For Heaven's sake," said I to my friend, "let us go somewhere where we can see a little genuine, blackguard, poverty-stricken gaming, with no false gingerbread glitter thrown over it at all. Let us get away from fashionable Frascati's to a house where they don't mind letting in a man with a ragged coat, or a man with no coat, ragged or otherwise."—"Very well," said my friend, "we needn't go out of the Palais Royal to find the sort of company you want. Here's the place just before us; as blackguard a place, by all report, as you could possibly wish to see." In another minute we arrived at the door, and entered the house.

When we got upstairs, and had left our hats and sticks with the doorkeeper, we were admitted into the chief gambling-room. We did not find a great many people assembled there. But, few in number as the men were who looked up at us on our entrance, they were all types—lamentably true types—of their respective classes.

We had come to see blackguards; but these men were something worse. There is a comic side, more or less appreciable, in all blackguardism—here there was nothing but tragedy—mute, weird tragedy. The quiet in the room was horrible. The thin, haggard, long-haired young man, whose sunken eyes fiercely watched the turning up of the cards, never spoke; the flabby, fat-faced, pimply player, who pricked his piece of pasteboard perseveringly, to register how often black won, and how often red—never spoke; the dirty, wrinkled old man, with the vulture eyes and the darned great-coat, who had lost his last *sou*, and still looked on desperately, after he could play no longer—never spoke. Even the voice of the croupier sounded as if it were strangely dulled and thickened in the atmosphere of the room. I had entered the place to laugh; but the spectacle before me was something to weep over. I soon found it necessary to take refuge in excitement from the depression of spirits which was fast stealing on me. Unfortunately I sought the nearest excitement, by going to the table, and beginning to play. Still more unfortunately, as the event will show, I won—won prodigiously; won incredibly; won at such a rate that the regular players at the table crowded round me; and staring at my stakes with hungry, superstitious eyes, whispered to one another that the English stranger was going to break the bank.

The game was *Rouge et Noir*. I had played at it in every city in Europe, without, however, the care or the wish to study the Theory of Chances—that philosopher's stone of all gamblers! And a gambler, in the strict sense of the word, I had never been. I was heart-whole from the corroding passion for play. My gaming was a mere idle amusement. I never resorted to it by necessity, because I never knew what it was to want money. I never practised it so incessantly as to lose more than I could afford, or to gain more than I could

coolly pocket without being thrown off my balance by my good luck. In short, I had hitherto frequented gambling-tables—just as I frequented ball-rooms and opera-houses—because they amused me, and because I had nothing better to do with my leisure hours.

But on this occasion it was very different—now, for the first time in my life, I felt what the passion for play really was. My success first bewildered, and then, in the most literal meaning of the word, intoxicated me. Incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that I only lost when I attempted to estimate chances, and played according to previous calculation. If I left everything to luck, and staked without any care or consideration, I was sure to win—to win in the face of every recognized probability in favour of the bank. At first, some of the men present ventured their money safely enough on my colour; but I speedily increased my stakes to sums which they dared not risk. One after another they left off playing, and breathlessly looked on at my game.

Still, time after time, I staked higher and higher, and still won. The excitement in the room rose to fever pitch. The silence was interrupted by a deep, muttered chorus of oaths and exclamations in different languages every time the gold was shovelled across to my side of the table—even the imperturbable croupier dashed his rake on the floor in a (French) fury of astonishment at my success. But one man present reserved his self-possession; and that man was my friend. He came to my side, and whispering in English, begged me to leave the place satisfied with what I had already gained. I must do him the justice to say, that he repeated his warnings and entreaties several times; and only left me and went away after I had rejected his advice (I was to all intents and purposes gambling-drunk) in terms which rendered it impossible for him to address me again that night.

Shortly after he had gone, a hoarse voice behind me cried:—"Permit me, my dear sir!—permit me to restore to their proper place two Napoleons which you have dropped. Wonderful luck, sir! I pledge you my word of honour as an old soldier, in the course of my long experience in this sort of thing, I never saw such luck as yours—never! Go on, sir—*Sacrè mille bombes!* Go on boldly, and break the bank!"

I turned round and saw, nodding and smiling at me with inveterate civility, a tall man, dressed in a frogged and braided surtout. If I had been in my senses, I should have considered him, personally, as being rather a suspicious specimen of an old soldier. He had goggling blood-shot eyes, mangy mustachios, and a broken nose. His voice betrayed a barrack-room intonation of the worst order, and he had the dirtiest pair of hands I ever saw—even in France. These little personal peculiarities exercised, however, no repelling influence on me. In the mad excitement, the reckless triumph of that moment, I was ready to "fraternize" with anybody who encouraged me in my game. I accepted the old soldier's offered pinch of snuff; clapped him on the back, and swore he was the honestest fellow in the world—the most glorious relic of the Grand Army that I had ever met with. "Go on!" cried my military friend, snapping his fingers in ecstasy,—"Go on, and win! Break the bank—*Mille tonnerres!* my gallant English comrade, break the bank!"

And I *did* go on—went on at such a rate, that in another quarter of an hour the croupier called out: "Gentlemen! the bank has discontinued for to-night." All the notes, and all the gold in that "bank," now lay in a heap under my hands; the whole floating capital of the gambling-house was waiting to pour into my pockets!

"Tie up the money in your pocket-handkerchief, my worthy sir," said the old soldier, as I wildly plunged my hands into my heap of gold. "Tie it up, as we used to tie up a bit of dinner in the Grand Army: your winnings are too heavy for any breeches pockets that ever were sewed. There! that's it!—shovel them in, notes and all! *Crediè!* what luck! Stop! another Napoleon on the floor! *Ah! sacrè petit polisson de Napoleon!* have I found thee at last? Now then, sir—two tight double knots each way with your honourable permission, and the money's safe. Feel it! feel it, fortunate sir! hard and round as a cannon ball—*Ah! bah!* if they had only fired such cannon balls at us at Austerlitz—*nom d'une pipe!* if they only had! And now, as an ancient grenadier, as an ex-brave of the French Army, what remains for me to do? I ask what? Simply this: to entreat my valued English friend to drink a bottle of champagne with me, and toast the goddess Fortune in foaming goblets before we part!"

"Excellent ex-brave! Convivial ancient grenadier! Champagne by all means! An English cheer for an old soldier! Hurrah! hurrah! Another English cheer for the goddess Fortune! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"Bravo! the Englishman; the amiable, gracious Englishman, in whose veins circulates the vivacious blood of France! Another glass *Ah, bah!*—the bottle is empty! Never mind! *Vive le vin!* I, the old soldier, order another bottle, and half a pound of *bon-bons* with it!"

"No, no, ex-brave; never—ancient grenadier! *Your* bottle last time; *my* bottle this. Behold it! Toast away! The French Army!—the great Napoleon!—the present company! the croupier! the honest croupier's wife and daughters—if he has any! the ladies generally! Everybody in the world!"

By the time the second bottle of champagne was emptied, I felt as if I had been drinking liquid fire—my brain seemed all a-flame. No excess in wine had ever had this effect on me before in my life. Was it the result of a stimulant acting upon my system when I was in a highly excited state? Was my stomach in a particularly disordered condition? Or was the champagne amazingly strong?

"Ex-brave of the French Army!" cried I, in a mad state of exhilaration, "*I* am on fire! how are *you*? You have set me on fire! Do you hear; my hero of Austerlitz? Let us have a third bottle of champagne to put the flame out!"

The old soldier wagged his head, rolled his goggle eyes, until I expected to see them slip out of their sockets; placed his dirty forefinger by the side of his broken nose; solemnly ejaculated "Coffee!" and immediately ran off into an inner room.

The word pronounced by the eccentric veteran seemed to have a magical effect on the rest of the company present. With one accord they all rose to depart. Probably they had expected to profit by my intoxication; but finding that my new friend was benevolently bent on preventing me from getting dead drunk, had now abandoned all hope of thriving pleasantly on my winnings. Whatever their motive might be, at any rate they went away in a body. When the old soldier returned, and sat down again opposite to me at the table, we had the room to ourselves. I could see the croupier, in a sort of vestibule which opened out of it, eating his supper in solitude. The silence was now deeper than ever.

A sudden change, too, had come over the "ex-brave." He assumed a portentously solemn look; and when he spoke to me again, his speech was ornamented by no oaths, enforced by no finger-snapping, enlivened by no apostrophes.

"Listen, my dear sir," said he, in mysteriously confidential tones—"listen to an old soldier's advice. I have been to the mistress of the house (a very charming woman, with a genius for cookery!) to impress on her the necessity of making us some particularly strong and good coffee. You must drink this coffee in order to get rid of your little amiable exaltation of spirits before you think of going home—you *must*, my good and gracious friend! With all that money to take home to-night, it is a sacred duty to yourself to have your wits about you. You are known to be a winner to an enormous extent by several gentlemen present to-night, who, in a certain point of view, are very worthy and excellent fellows; but they are mortal men, my dear sir, and they have their amiable weaknesses! Need I say more? Ah, no, no! you understand me! Now, this is what you must do—send for a cabriolet when you feel quite well again—draw up all the windows when you get into it—and tell the driver to take you home only through the large and well-lighted thoroughfares. Do this; and you and your money will be safe. Do this; and to-morrow you will thank an old soldier for giving you a word of honest advice."

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JUST as the ex-brave ended his oration in very lachrymose tones, the coffee came in, ready poured out in two cups. My attentive friend handed me one of the cups with a bow. I was parched with thirst, and drank it off at a draught. Almost instantly afterwards, I was seized with a fit of giddiness, and felt more completely intoxicated than ever. The room whirled round and round furiously; the old soldier seemed to be regularly bobbing up and down before me like the piston of a steam-engine. I was half deafened by a violent singing in my ears; a feeling of utter bewilderment, helplessness, idiocy, overcame me. I rose from my chair, holding on by the table to keep my balance; and stammered out, that I felt unwell—so unwell that I did not know how I was to get home.

"My dear friend," answered the old soldier, and even his voice seemed to be bobbing up and down as he spoke—"my dear friend, it would be madness to go home in *your* state; you would be sure to lose your money; you might be robbed and murdered with the greatest ease. *I* am going to sleep here: do *you* sleep here, too—they make up capital beds in this house—take one; sleep off the effects of the wine, and go home safely with your winnings to-morrow—to-morrow in broad daylight."

I had but two ideas left—one, that I must never let go of my handkerchief full of money; the other, that I must lie down somewhere immediately, and fall off into a comfortable sleep. So I agreed to the proposal about the bed, and took the offered arm of the old soldier, carrying my money with my disengaged hand. Preceded by the croupier, we passed along some passages and up a flight of stairs into the bedroom which I was to occupy. The ex-brave shook me warmly by the hand; proposed that we should breakfast together, and then, followed by the croupier, left me for the night.

I ran to the wash-hand stand; drank some of the water in my jug; poured the rest out, and plunged my face into it—then sat down in a chair and tried to compose myself. I soon felt better. The change for my lungs, from the fetid atmosphere of the gambling-room to the cool air of the apartment I now occupied; the almost equally refreshing change for my eyes, from the glaring gas-lights of the "Salon" to the dim, quiet flicker of one bedroom candle, aided wonderfully the restorative effects of cold water. The giddiness left me, and I began to feel a little like a reasonable being again. My first thought was of the risk of sleeping all night in a gambling-house; my second, of the still greater risk of trying to get out after the house was closed, and of going home alone at night, through the streets of Paris with a large sum of money about me. I had slept in worse places than this on my travels, so I determined to lock, bolt, and barricade my door, and take my chance till the next morning.

Accordingly, I secured myself against all intrusion; looked under the bed and into the cupboard; tried the fastening of the window; and then, satisfied that I had taken every proper precaution, pulled off my upper clothing, put my light, which was a dim one, on the hearth among a feathery litter of wood ashes, and got into bed, with the handkerchief full of money under my pillow.

I soon felt not only that I could not go to sleep, but that I could not even close my eyes. I was wide awake, and in a high fever. Every nerve in my body trembled—every one of my senses seemed to be preternaturally sharpened. I tossed and rolled, and tried every kind of position, and perseveringly sought out the cold corners of the bed, and all to no purpose. Now, I thrust my arms over the clothes; now, I poked them under the clothes; now, I violently shot my legs straight out down to the bottom of the bed; now, I convulsively coiled them up as near my chin as they would go; now, I shook out my crumpled pillow, changed it to the cool side, patted it flat, and lay down quietly on my back; now, I fiercely doubled it in two, set it up on end, thrust it against the board of the bed, and tried a sitting-posture. Every effort was in vain; I groaned with vexation, as I felt that I was in for a sleepless night.

What could I do? I had no book to read. And yet, unless I found out some method of diverting my mind, I felt certain that I was in the condition to imagine all sorts of horrors; to rack my brain with forebodings of every possible and impossible danger; in short, to pass the night in suffering all conceivable varieties of nervous terror.

I raised myself on my elbow, and looked about the room—which was brightened by a lovely moonlight pouring straight through the window—to see if it contained any pictures or ornaments that I could at all clearly distinguish. While my eyes wandered from wall to wall, a remembrance of Le Maistre's delightful little book, "Voyage autour de ma Chambre," occurred to me. I resolved to imitate the French author, and find occupation and amusement enough to relieve the tedium of my wakefulness, by making a mental inventory of every article of furniture I could see, and by following up to their sources the multitude of associations which even a chair, a table, or a wash-hand stand may be made to call forth.

In the nervous, unsettled state of my mind at that moment, I found it much easier to make my inventory than to make my reflections, and thereupon soon gave up all hope of thinking in Le Maistre's fanciful track—or, indeed, of thinking at all. I

looked about the room at the different articles of furniture, and did nothing more.

There was, first, the bed I was lying in; a four-post bed, of all things in the world to meet with in Paris!—yes, a thorough clumsy British four-poster, with the regular top lined with chintz—the regular fringed valance all round—the regular stifling unwholesome curtains, which I remembered having mechanically drawn back against the posts without particularly noticing the bed when I first got into the room. Then there was the marble-topped wash-hand stand, from which the water I had spilt, in my hurry to pour it out, was still dripping, slowly and more slowly, on to the brick-floor. Then two small chairs, with my coat, waistcoat, and trousers flung on them. Then a large elbow chair, covered with dirty-white dimity, with my cravat and shirt-collar thrown over the back. Then a chest of drawers with two of the brass handles off, and a tawdry, broken china inkstand placed on it by way of ornament for the top. Then the dressing-table, adorned by a very small looking-glass, and a very large pin-cushion. Then the window—an unusually large window. Then a dark old picture, which the feeble candle dimly showed me. It was the picture of a fellow in a high Spanish hat, crowned with a plume of towering feathers. A swarthy sinister ruffian, looking upward, shading his eyes with his hand, and looking intently upward—it might be at some tall gallows at which he was going to be hanged. At any rate, he had the appearance of thoroughly deserving it.

This picture put a kind of constraint upon me to look upward too—at the top of the bed. It was a gloomy and not an interesting object, and I looked back at the picture. I counted the feathers in the man's hat—they stood out in relief—three white, two green. I observed the crown of his hat, which was of a conical shape, according to the fashion supposed to have been favoured by Guido Fawkes. I wondered what he was looking up at. It couldn't be at the stars; such a desperado was neither astrologer nor astronomer. It must be at the high gallows, and he was going to be hanged presently. Would the executioner come into possession of his conical crowned hat and plume of feathers? I counted the feathers again—three white, two green.

While I still lingered over this very improving and intellectual employment, my thoughts insensibly began to wander. The moonlight shining into the room reminded me of a certain moonlight night in England—the night after a picnic party in a Welsh valley. Every incident of the drive homeward, through lovely scenery, which the moonlight made lovelier than ever, came back to my remembrance, though I had never given the picnic a thought for years; though, if I had *tried* to recollect it, I could certainly have recalled little or nothing of that scene long past. Of all the wonderful faculties that help to tell us we are immortal, which speaks the sublime truth more eloquently than memory? Here was I in a strange house of the most suspicious character, in a situation of uncertainty, and even of peril, which might seem to make the cool exercise of my recollection almost out of the question; nevertheless, remembering, quite involuntarily, places, people, conversations, minute circumstances of every kind, which I had thought forgotten for ever, which I could not possibly have recalled at will even under the most favourable auspices. And what cause had produced in a moment the whole of this strange, complicated, mysterious effect? Nothing but some rays of moonlight shining in at my bedroom window.

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I WAS still thinking of the picnic—of our merriment on the drive home—of the sentimental young lady who *would* quote Childe Harold because it was moonlight. I was absorbed by these past scenes and past amusements, when, in an instant, the thread on which my memories hung snapped asunder: my attention immediately came back to present things more vividly than ever, and I found myself, I neither knew why nor wherefore, looking hard at the picture again.

Looking for what?

Good God, the man had pulled his hat down on his brows!—No!—the hat itself was gone! Where was the conical crown? Where the feathers—three white, two green? Not there! In place of the hat and feathers, what dusky object was it that now hid his forehead, his eyes, his shading hand?

Was the bed moving?

I turned on my back and looked up. Was I mad? drunk? dreaming? giddy again? or was the top of the bed really

moving down—sinking slowly, regularly, silently, horribly, right down throughout the whole of its length and breadth—right down upon Me, as I lay underneath?

My blood seemed to stand still. A deadly, paralysing coldness stole all over me, as I turned my head round on the pillow, and determined to test whether the bed-top was really moving or not, by keeping my eye on the man in the picture.

The next look in that direction was enough. The dull, black, frowsy outline of the valance above me was within an inch of being parallel with his waist. I still looked breathlessly. And steadily, and slowly—very slowly—I saw the figure, and the line of frame below the figure, vanish, as the valance moved down before it.

I am, constitutionally, anything but timid. I have been on more than one occasion in peril of my life, and have not lost my self-possession for an instant; but when the conviction first settled on my mind that the bed-top was really moving, was steadily and continuously sinking down upon me, I looked up shuddering, helpless, panic-stricken, beneath the hideous machinery for murder, which was advancing closer and closer to suffocate me where I lay.

I looked up, motionless, speechless, breathless. The candle, fully spent, went out; but the moonlight still brightened the room. Down and down, without pausing and without sounding, came the bed-top, and still my panic terror seemed to bind me faster and faster to the mattress on which I lay—down and down it sank, till the dusty odour from the lining of the canopy came stealing into my nostrils.

At that final moment the instinct of self-preservation startled me out of my trance, and I moved at last. There was just room for me to roll myself sideways off the bed. As I dropped noiselessly to the floor, the edge of the murderous canopy touched me on the shoulder.

Without stopping to draw my breath, without wiping the cold sweat from my face, I rose instantly on my knees to watch the bed-top. I was literally spell-bound by it.

It descended—the whole canopy with the fringe round it, came down—down—close down; so close that there was not room now to squeeze my finger between the bed-top and the bed. I felt at the sides, and discovered that what had appeared to me from beneath to be the ordinary light canopy of a four-post bed, was in reality a thick, broad mattress, the substance of which was concealed by the valance and its fringe. I looked up and saw the four posts rising hideously bare. In the middle of the bed-top was a huge wooden screw that had evidently worked it down through a hole in the ceiling, just as ordinary presses are worked down on the substance selected for compression. The frightful apparatus moved without making the faintest noise. There had been no creaking as it came down. Still, as I looked on it, I could not move, I could hardly breathe, but I began to recover the power of thinking, and in a moment I discovered the murderous conspiracy framed against me in all its horror.

My cup of coffee had been drugged, and drugged too strongly. I had been saved from being smothered by having taken an overdose of some narcotic. How I had chafed and fretted at the fever-fit which had preserved my life by keeping me awake! How recklessly I had confided myself to the two wretches who had led me into this room, determined, for the sake of my winnings, to kill me in my sleep by the surest and most horrible contrivance for secretly accomplishing my destruction! How many men, winners like me, had slept, as I had proposed to sleep, in that bed, and had never been seen or heard of more! I shuddered at the bare idea of it.

But, ere long, all thought was again suspended by the sight of the murderous canopy moving once more. After it had remained on the bed—as nearly as I could guess—about ten minutes, it began to move up again. The villains who worked it from above evidently believed that their purpose was now accomplished. Slowly and silently, as it had descended, that horrible bed-top rose towards its former place. When it reached the upper extremities of the four posts, it reached the ceiling too. Neither hole nor screw could be seen; the bed became in appearance an ordinary bed again—the canopy an ordinary canopy.

Now, for the first time, I was able to move—to rise from my knees—to dress myself in my upper clothing—and to consider of how I should escape. If I betrayed, by the smallest noise, that the attempt to suffocate me had failed, I was certain to be murdered. Had I made any noise already? I listened intently, looking towards the door.

No! no footsteps in the passage outside—no sound of a tread, light or heavy, in the

room above—absolute silence everywhere. Besides locking and bolting my door, I had moved an old wooden chest against it, which I had found under the bed. To remove this chest (my blood ran cold as I thought what its contents *might* be!) without making some disturbance was impossible; and, moreover, to think of escaping through the house, now barred up for the night, was sheer insanity. Only one chance was left me—the window. I stole to it on tiptoe.

My bedroom was on the first floor, above an *entresol*, and looked into the back street. I raised my hand to open the window, knowing that on that action hung, by the merest hair's breadth, my chance of safety. They keep vigilant watch in a House of Murder. If any part of the frame cracked, if the hinge creaked, I was a lost man! It must have occupied me at least five minutes, reckoning by time—five *hours*, reckoning by suspense—to open that window. I succeeded in doing it silently—in doing it with all the dexterity of a housebreaker—and then looked down into the street. To leap the distance beneath me would be almost certain destruction! Next, I looked round at the sides of the house. Down the left side ran a thick water-pipe—it passed close by the outer edge of the window.

To some men the means of escape which I had discovered might have seemed difficult and dangerous enough—to *me* the prospect of slipping down the pipe into the street did not suggest even a thought of peril. I had always been accustomed, by the practice of gymnastics, to keep up my schoolboy powers as a daring and expert climber; and knew that my head, hands, and feet would serve me faithfully in any hazards of ascent or descent.

I had already got one leg over the window-sill, when I remembered the handkerchief filled with money under my pillow. I could well have afforded to leave it behind me, but I was revengefully determined that the miscreants of the gambling-house should miss their plunder as well as their victim. So I went back to the bed and tied the heavy handkerchief at my back by my cravat.

Just as I had made it tight and fixed it in a comfortable place, I thought I heard a sound of breathing outside the door. The chill feeling of horror ran through me again as I listened. No! dead silence still in the passage—I had only heard the night-air blowing softly into the room. The next moment I was on the window-sill—and the next I had a firm grip on the water-pipe.

I slid down into the street easily and quietly, as I thought I should, and immediately set off at the top of my speed to a branch "Prefecture" of Police, which I knew was situated in the immediate neighbourhood. A "Sub-prefect," and several picked men among his subordinates, happened to be up, maturing, I believe, some scheme for discovering the perpetrator of a mysterious murder which all Paris was talking of just then. When I began my story, in a breathless hurry and in very bad French, I could see that the Sub-prefect suspected me of being a drunken Englishman who had robbed somebody; but he soon altered his opinion as I went on, and before I had anything like concluded, he shoved all the papers before him into a drawer, put on his hat, supplied me with another (for I was bare-headed), ordered a file of soldiers, desired his expert followers to get ready all sorts of tools for breaking open doors and ripping up brick-flooring, and took my arm, in the most friendly and familiar manner possible, to lead me with him out of the house.

Sentinels were placed at the back and front of the house the moment we got to it; a tremendous battery of knocks was directed against the door; a light appeared at a window; I was told to conceal myself behind the police—then came more knocks, and a cry of "Open in the name of the law!" At that terrible summons bolts and locks gave way before an invisible hand, and the moment after the Sub-prefect was in the passage, confronting a waiter half-dressed and ghastly pale. This was the short dialogue which immediately took place:

"We want to see the Englishman who is sleeping in this house?"

"He went away hours ago."

"He did no such thing. His friend went away; *he* remained. Show us to his bedroom!"

"I swear to you, Monsieur Le Sous-prefet, he is not here! he——"

"I swear to you, Monsieur le Garçon, he is. He slept here—he didn't find your bed comfortable—he came to us to complain of it—here he is among my men—and here am I ready to look for a flea or two in his bedstead. Renaudin! (calling to one of the subordinates, and pointing to the

waiter) collar that man, and tie his hands behind him. Now, then, gentlemen, let us walk upstairs!"

Every man and woman in the house was secured—the "Old Soldier" the first. Then I identified the bed in which I had slept, and then we went into the room above.

No object that was at all extraordinary appeared in any part of it. The Sub-prefect looked round the place, commanded everybody to be silent, stamped twice on the floor, called for a candle, looked attentively at the spot he had stamped on, and ordered the flooring there to be carefully taken up. This was done in no time. Lights were produced, and we saw a deep raftered cavity between the floor of this room and the ceiling of the room beneath. Through this cavity there ran perpendicularly a sort of case of iron thickly greased; and inside the case appeared the screw, which communicated with the bed-top below. Extra lengths of screw, freshly oiled; levers covered with felt; all the complete upper works of a heavy press—constructed with infernal ingenuity so as to join the fixtures below, and when taken to pieces again to go into the smallest possible compass—were next discovered and pulled out on the floor. After some little difficulty the Sub-prefect succeeded in putting the machinery together, and, leaving his men to work it, descended with me to the bedroom. The smothering canopy was then lowered, but not so noiselessly as I had seen it lowered. When I mentioned this to the Sub-prefect, his answer, simple as it was, had a terrible significance. "My men," said he, "are working down the bed-top for the first time—the men whose money you won were in better practice."

We left the house in the sole possession of two police agents—every one of the inmates being removed to prison on the spot. The Sub-prefect, after taking down my "*procès-verbal*" in his office, returned with me to my hotel to get my passport. "Do you think," I asked, as I gave it to him, "that any men have really been smothered in that bed, as they tried to smother *me?*"

"I have seen dozens of drowned men laid out at the Morgue," answered the Sub-prefect, "in whose pocket-books were found letters, stating that they had committed suicide in the Seine, because they had lost everything at the gaming-table. Do I know how many of those men entered the same gambling-house that *you* entered? won as *you* won? took that bed as *you* took it? slept in it? were smothered in it? and were privately thrown into the river, with a letter of explanation written by the murderers and placed in their pocket-books? No man can say how many or how few have suffered the fate from which you have escaped.

The rest of my story is soon told. I was examined and re-examined; the gambling-house was strictly searched all through from top to bottom; the prisoners were separately interrogated; and two of the less guilty among them made a confession. *I* discovered that the Old Soldier was the master of the gambling-house—*justice* discovered that he had been drummed out of the army as a vagabond years ago; that he had been guilty of all sorts of villainies since; that he was in possession of stolen property, which the owners identified; and that he, the croupier, another accomplice, and the woman who had made my cup of coffee, were all in the secret of the bedstead. There appeared some reason to doubt whether the inferior persons attached to the house knew anything of the suffocating machinery; and they received the benefit of that doubt, by being treated simply as thieves and vagabonds. As for the Old Soldier and his two head-myrmidons, they went to the galleys; the woman who had drugged my coffee was imprisoned for I forget how many years; the regular attendants at the gambling-house were considered "suspicious," and placed under "surveillance"; and I became for one whole week (which is a long time), the head "lion" in Parisian society. My adventure was dramatized by three illustrious playmakers, but never saw theatrical daylight; for the censorship forbade the introduction on the stage of a correct copy of the gambling-house bedstead.

One good result was produced by my adventure which any censorship must have approved—it cured me of ever again trying "Rouge et Noir" as an amusement. The sight of a green cloth, with packs of cards and heaps of money on it, will henceforth be for ever associated in my mind with the sight of a bed-canopy descending to suffocate me in the silence and darkness of the night.

(Another mystery story next month)

The Sun that Shines on the Dead

By VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ

Vicente Blasco Ibañez is the best known Spanish author now living. His "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"—a plea for the peace ideal and an exposure of war—is world famous. By special arrangement I am able to present the latest work from his pen—a short story revealing his art at its best.

WHENEVER anyone complimented the poet Montalbo on the amazing celebrity he enjoyed throughout the world, he always sat impenetrably silent. Sometimes he would smile even more impenetrably. Celebrity! . . . Fame! . . . What, after all, were they but "the uttering of one name by many mouths?" . . . And a friend of his, an author like himself, was for ever saying: "Fame? . . . Yes! . . . The chilly sunshine of the dead!"

At thought of this cold pale luminary that shines for so small a number of those who have lived on our earth, Montalbo would shiver. . . . How long would its wan light fall on his tomb? Strange how that particular reflection tormented him! Some day even the sunlight of posthumous glory might cease to shine on him! His whole life had been devoted, eagerly, confidently, to winning just such distinction. But how cold and bleak it seemed to him now! No!—Let him rather warm himself in the commonplace sunshine of the living!

After all, he thought, only a very few of the famous books of the past have survived until our day. And of these few, a still smaller number are actually read. "The great public—my public—runs away from them, even while, out of respect for a convention, it murmurs their titles."

Better far to keep to the present! There, at least, fame was for him something positive, something delightful. Montalbo was keenly conscious of its cheerful glow. He had no reason to complain of the shortcomings of the present! The sun of success had transformed his existence as in a torrid heat, rapidly sprouting stray seeds of genius, stimulating them to exuberant increase till they had become a dense grove filled with murmurous life!

In years gone by Montalbo had seen days brightened by not even a promise of the glory that was to come. How slow and painful those first hesitant steps of his toward celebrity! France was not his native land. His forbears had been South Americans—one of those fabulously rich families with estates as vast as provinces. A hero of the Spanish conquest of the new world, Don Alonso de Montalbo, sea captain and colonist, had founded a city.

The poet's own father had married in Paris and carried off a young French wife to the other side of the Atlantic. The man had all the characteristics, good and bad, of the South American Creole. Chivalrous and irresponsible, sentimental and cruel, he was capable of any sacrifice for a woman he loved, and capable also of forgetting her half an hour later.

Francisco Montalbo often noticed in himself certain traits of his father, though he had never known him—the older Montalbo had been murdered in a political intrigue when his son was barely a few months old. The family patrimony had been utterly squandered in the course of the elder Montalbo's exciting career, and on his death his widow had returned to Paris.

And so it came about that her son, christened "José Maria" in Spanish fashion and bearing the proud surname of the old *conquistador*, had stammered his first words in French. But, in the kitchen, little José Maria had to learn Spanish to make himself understood by the fat Bernarda, a half-breed with black eyes that burned, and thick lips that were ever puckered in a pout. Bernarda's chief grievance was the dreadful cold of this barbarous French city where people maliciously insisted on speaking a different language from the one

used in her country. Nevertheless, she bravely followed her mistress in all that poor lady's wanderings; and despite the increasing poverty of the little family, she could not find it in her heart to forsake the child who accepted her caresses much as a mischievous, affectionate lap-dog might do.

But all the privations of his childhood, the difficulties of his school years, the loneliness to which his foreign name and his status as an exile often condemned him, his mother's death, and the bitter poverty he had struggled against after his marriage, softened, grew dim, vanished, when Montalbo thought of the comforts and the wide horizons of his present position. After a hard initiation into life during his first pursuit of literary glory, Fame at last had showed herself inexhaustibly generous towards him.

His books were read by millions of readers. His verse was known in lands where no one could read it in the original. His plays often ran years at a time, and, of late, the cinema had added the charm of motion and visible plasticity to many of his novels. Security and wealth had come as the result of this far-reaching success. The little boy who, in less happy days, had had to use all his wiles to persuade Bernarda to give him another slice of bread from the almost empty cupboard, the wanderer who more than once had been forced to spend a night in the street for lack of other shelter after the cafés had closed, now owned a fine house of his own in the Passy quarter near the *Bois*—a luxurious dwelling where admirers and disciples visited him to the furious envy of his literary rivals. He owned besides a historic *château* on the banks of the Loire, where he spent the mellow days of autumn. And in winter he made a slow pilgrimage down the *Côte d'Azur*, stopping at Nice for the carnival, and spending a few days watching the picturesque and motley crowds at Monte Carlo. Every post brought him letters from admirers in remote corners of the earth. He was respected, venerated as one of the outstanding men of his time. The talk about him included even slander and gossip—those inverted forms of hero-worship! . . . Never, not even in moments of the most exaggerated optimism, could the Montalbo of those early years of wretched poverty have foreseen a time when material success and the aura of fame would so transform his life.

And yet . . .

Man is eternal restlessness, he is doubt perpetually renewed. The great novelist, turning on himself the analytical powers with which he judged the creatures of his fancy, could not help asking himself from time to time:

"Am I really happy?"

II

HE was barely twenty, when, after his mother's death, he went to live in the Latin Quarter; and there, amid the torturing anxieties of ambitious youth, struggling for an eventual reputation, but meanwhile for bread, he had first discovered love—or better, he had found the first satisfactions of male vanity.

Badly dressed, ill-nourished as he was, he yet attracted the attention of fashionable women who passed him on the street. The dark pallor of his cheeks was framed by close cut "siders" which ran down to below the line of his ear tips. From his remote ancestors he had inherited a soft black beard well cut nostrils, eyes with pupils that had something of the softness of velvet—marks of the Arabs of Andalucia, the forerunners of the *conquistador*.

The girls of the quarter, Russian students, artists' models, or simple aspirants to the tenancy of a luxurious apartment on the "other bank" of the Seine, admired his "exotic piquancy." One of them, who had certain pretensions to authority on artistic matters—she frequented so many studios!—called him "Velazquez." His friends, who knew something of his history, referred to him as "the Conquistador."

It was during this period of his life that Montalbo came to know Duprat, the sculptor and the latter's daughter, Matilde. The artist, already depressed by a premature advance of old age and given to complaining bitterly that his own lack of success was due to the envy and machinations of rival sculptors of his own generation, found solace for his discontent in the society of younger men. They, at least, treated him with respect and called him "master"—though, if the truth were to be told, more out of regard for his years than for his achievements as a sculptor.

Duprat inhabited a shabby studio in an alley of Montrouge, and there, in the late afternoon, young Bohemians of the Latin Quarter, or from Montparnasse would

assemble to talk with the old man of "art," and "methods," and their latest disappointments. Hatred of the success won by others, contempt for the "old fellows," who were nothing but "bourgeois" and "stand-patters"—envy in short, the poisonous intoxicant to which failure turns for solace—was the bond uniting Duprat and his young friends.

And then, there was the sculptor's daughter! To be sure Matilde had nothing about her to feed vain illusions in any of her father's young friends. Quiet, speaking very little, a model housekeeper, no one understood how she could be so different in temperament from her erratic parent. Of her mother nothing was known; but it seemed natural to suppose that Matilde must be the living memento of one of Duprat's early relations—with some woman of the people, probably, who had long ago dropped out of his life.

Matilde had no intention of falling in love with any of her father's cronies, as each of them found out in turn. Whether they posed as men of genius certain of future fame, or as wild, scatter-brained, happy-go-lucky youths, they soon discovered that all their efforts were so much time lost. Matilde received them as though she too were a guest in the studio, holding herself quietly and gently aloof like someone from another world. Nor did she always conceal a mild scorn for the theories and manners of her father's associates. Happiness for her obviously consisted in an orderly, clean house, where life went on quietly and methodically.

Yet Matilde had a kind of beauty—"muffled" some of the frequenters of the studio called it, a reflection from within of a modest gentleness, a beauty that escaped the first hasty glance to reveal itself little by little. New members of the circle always wondered at first—"Is Matilde a pretty girl?" And inevitably the answer would slowly formulate itself—"Pretty, yes; but no wife for an artist!"

The girl spent little time in the studio. A girlhood passed with relatives of her mother, had not prepared her to relish the rather free conversations that went on between her father and the young men who sought his society. The indecencies of speech current among them passed over her unperceived—she didn't understand! With the grave absorption of a Vestal she moved about the studio untouched by its Bohemian ferment. For the most part she kept to a room adjoining. It was only on occasions when her father, proud to show that he could still earn money in spite of the machinations of his brother sculptors, treated his guests to a bottle of wine or a cask of beer, that Matilde put in an appearance, serving the refreshments with the composure of a châtelaine quite sure of herself.

And how she seemed to dislike him, Montalbo! For a long time the girl's hostility had given him a kind of distinction among the other guests. She openly avoided him, appearing not to hear his gallantries, or else receiving them with ill-concealed annoyance. Why? Perhaps because of that certain exotic charm he had, which aroused the enthusiasm of the girls of the Latin Quarter? Or perhaps because of allusions by her father and others to "conquests" by the "Conquistador"? The brilliant young poet seemed to be for her the symbol of all the boastful fatuousness and talkative idling that she silently despised in those who haunted her father's studio.

But it was just this silent disapproval which caught Montalbo's attention, piquing his vanity, disturbing his calm. One afternoon—they never knew how it happened—they met face to face and looked at one another for what seemed to be the first time. Something they saw in each other's eyes held them silent and absorbed.

He had always considered Matilde an insignificant young person, just about good enough to be the wife of some underfed government clerk; but in that moment of mutual revelation he discovered in her quiet features a beauty he had never suspected she possessed, a beauty surpassing in its simplicity and charm that of all the women he had known. For Matilde, meanwhile, the innermost soul of the youth had revealed itself in that one sustained glance. "Velasquez was a good boy," she decided. What though there might be stories about him? She knew the truth!

Nor could Montalbo, as he recalled this part of his life, decide which one of them had been the first to reveal the love so suddenly awakened. Perhaps both of them had discovered it simultaneously; perhaps, divining the mutual attraction which was drawing them together, they were bound by love before either of them had spoken the word.

They began to meet away from the studio. What room was there for them in that

atmosphere of envious disparagement and flaccid enthusiasms, in that air heavy with tobacco fumes, and smelling of fever and poverty? Matilde was free to come and go. Her father was too preoccupied to question her. And so the two lovers sought the comparative isolation of the *Bois*, or of some garden on the right bank of the Seine far from parts of the older city where they might have been recognized.

From the very first they spoke of marriage as though a love like theirs could conceive of no other kind of union; and the impetus of this wholesome, serious passion gave to Montalbo new strength, new energy, new will to live and work. With Matilde to advise and encourage him he found himself overcoming with perfect ease difficulties which formerly would have disheartened him as insurmountable.

Matilde seemed to bring him good-luck, a modest, limited kind of good-luck, but never failing. It was just at this moment in his life that the important reviews began publishing his verse, and some of his earlier stories. For the first time he was making a little money by writing. And it was Matilde's sober common sense which prevailed on him to turn away from "groups" and "schools," and snobbish magazines which were read only by their contributors, and never paid for what they published.

III

BUT, just at the moment when the young poet believed himself on the road to fortune —hadn't Matilde put away several hundred francs which his stories had brought him, and which were to pay for a modest ménage for the young couple?—an event occurred which seemed to Montalbo as overwhelming as the catastrophe of a classic tragedy.

Duprat's venomous phrase for artists who had won reputation and wealth was "the chosen few." But from this prosperous and therefore contemptible élite he excepted the composer Fontana. For this celebrity the embittered old sculptor felt, not the hatred which the musician's success might have inspired, but the kind of affable toleration that old men have for a colleague who has lived through the struggles of youth and poverty with them. The fact that Fontana, who knew nothing at all about painting, treated the artist as an equal—and Fontana was considered a great man by his admirers—had much to do with Duprat's acceptance of him. The musician was always ready to agree that Duprat was a misunderstood genius, above the comprehension of the crowd. Why not? That concession in no wise diminished his own importance!

Fontana had reasons for his visits to Duprat's studio. Through a friend to whom Duprat was in the habit of confiding his financial difficulties, Montalbo learned what those reasons were. The composer was a suitor for Matilde's hand!

The news seemed monstrous to the young poet. Why, Fontana was older than the girl's father! Moreover, one "episode" after another had crowded his life. In his younger days, on the concert platform, he had been the cynosure of all the fashionable lorgnettes in Paris. And he had made good use of his opportunities. There were stories even to prove that he had abused them, taking pecuniary advantage of that mysterious power which musicians and actors exercise over the feminine half of their audiences. Then came the success of his operas, every one of them concerning the eternal theme of love, which brought him innumerable callers of the opposite sex, armed with photographs on which he must inscribe his name—or more than his name, if he only would!

Yet no one could know that these adventures looked far more romantic when viewed from afar than they ever seemed to Fontana. He was weary of them. The sight of Matilde, with her tranquil beauty, her calm, skilful management of her father's poor little home, had turned the composer's thoughts to the commonplace pleasures of marriage. Just so a traveller, returning from wanderings around the globe, and weary of rare exotic fruits, feels a sudden delicious hunger to visit the orchard that surrounds the house where he was born. The almost pitying tenderness an old man experiences at sight of a young girl reminded him of his mother's industrious nest-making. The famous composer decided to marry!

"Such a stroke of luck!"

That was how Duprat put it to the confidant in question.

"A man, not only distinguished, but famous—and rich, my friend! rich! And when he dies—of course, he will die before Matilde—she will inherit his royalties—and his operas are being given all over the world!"

The girl's father never doubted for a moment that the proposed marriage would come off. Neither did Montalbo. How could he? He was just nobody. On what ground could he compete with the famous Fontana?

Of course, for a moment it did occur to him that even an unknown poet had the right to kill a celebrated musician if the latter got in his way. But this murderous anger did not last long. Matilde would accept the match! And Matilde would be right! Why should a girl put aside such a tempting offer of wealth, position, and reflected celebrity?

For Montalbo, too, was dazzled by Fontana's fame. He remembered numerous Sunday afternoons at concerts which had been the musical events of their seasons, and where his own enthusiasm had been but one quivering drop in a sea of plaudits that dashed in foaming breakers over the barrier of footlights. How many times had he acclaimed and applauded this man's compositions! On one occasion he had even fought with his fists to silence members of the audience who were trying to "fan" one of the *mæstro's* compositions of ultra-modern audacity.

Even to Matilde, sitting beside him on a bench in the Luxembourg, Montalbo's voice sounded faint and hollow. He was like a helpless child about to burst into tears.

"Fontana wants to marry you. Your father considers it an honour—for him! And, of course, you'll accept! He has what I lack, Matilde—recognition!"

Matilde looked at him with such a wondering gaze as a woman, accustomed to the exaggeration of the children of genius, receives the wild absurdities she hears. Then she smiled:

"But Fontana is an antique! He is older than father!"

She paused; and then, in a full, clear tone, like a bell ringing at dawn in a quiet village, she added:

"Love me as much as you can, and don't worry about the *mæstro*. You have something that he hasn't and can never have!"

IV

THOSE first years of his marriage! He thought of them now as one thinks back to times of poverty when one is rich, or to perilous adventures when one is safe from danger.

A little room . . . the dining room of the poor little flat they rented in an old apartment house inhabited by clerks and fairly prosperous labouring men . . . he and Matilde sitting there at night, while he wrote, under the yellow glow of the lamp, his manuscript accumulating on the white oilcloth that served as table cover! What dreams, what hopes, had taken shape in that poor little room!

It was his most famous works that he had written there—only, they had passed entirely unnoticed! One of his novels that was now circling the globe, selling by the thousands in several countries at a time, had lain neglected. For years, apparently, it had never occurred to anyone to read it! His plays, written in that same room, where the smell of hastily prepared food hung about in the cupboards and curtains, were now bringing in a generous income to their author. They, too, had slept long in the archives of theatre managers, who had either forgotten them, or judged them impossible to produce.

And while he wrote, Matilde, on the other side of the table, writing too! Not on large sheets of paper, but in a little brown notebook. Searching around a bit in his library he would surely come upon some of these little memorandas of Matilde's:

	frs.	*cts.*
Coal . .	1	50
Sugar . .	0	37
Coffee . .	0	70
Bread . .	1	25
Meat . .	2	0

When she stopped writing and began adding up the columns, she, too, would frown, just as he did, while unravelling in a plot some intrigue of fashionable society. But Matilde scowled from the desperate effort she was making to bring her totals down to the little budget their resources allowed.

Then the babies came—two in a row! Montalbo had to work later at night. And Matilde? He felt the mingled stirrings of tenderness and remorse as he thought of the endless sacrifices those years had demanded of his courageous help-meet. She had given up wine, then coffee, proclaiming emphatically that they were bad for the health. Without them, there was

more milk for the babies. Then she discovered that meat was too bad for her. And while he ate his steaks, and drank the Burgundy she always found a way to provide—for how could he write if he didn't have food?—she pretended to have no appetite, and ate whatever was left, or else cheaper things that she would never have served to a hard-working husband!

Little by little, however, the earnings of his pen increased, and just as he had become convinced that he was doomed to eternal haggling with publishers who despised his stories, and to unending struggles with a public that persisted in forgetting his name, success suddenly came—and celebrity! The flare and noise of it dazzled his eyes, deafened his ears.

He had never been able to discover on just what day he began to be famous; nor just when Fortune began to pour a stream of gold into his hands. But one morning the postman brought him a cartload of letters and periodicals bearing stamps of all the nations in the world. From then onwards he noticed that instead of having to wait his turn in the ante-rooms of editors, he received letters from them inviting him to lunch. His rise after passing this critical point was rapid. Triumph followed triumph, just as, in dreams, the tyrannous law of gravity vanishes, permitting one to fly lightly over any obstacle.

Montalbo, just turned forty, had become the favourite of two continents, and seen the gentle rain of riches descending on him turn into a veritable cloudburst, when Matilde, much older than her years, and still preserving an almost plebeian mien that assorted oddly with the youthful stylishness of her husband, passed out of his life. The beautiful house Montalbo had bought for her near the Pare Monceau, the servants he now hired to relieve her of the slightest exertion, the dashing pair of horses that were kept for her own special use, all these seemed like so many arguments to prove to Matilde that she could go now—that her task was done! As he looked back, Montalbo doubted whether disease had been the real cause of her death. It was as though she had died to leave the man she loved entirely free to pursue his now triumphant career in the world.

And free he had been—free to follow the flame that was walking beside him as a fireless guide, free to know all the pleasures that celebrity can bring. His surroundings could not have been more luxurious. He had money in every great bank in the world. When his name was spoken in a crowd, everyone turned to stare. As for the critics, he even complained that he was not more frequently attacked. He craved a little shade to rest his eyes in the dazzling unbroken glare of his renown.

And love, too, was now entirely at his command. In full maturity of mind and body, handsome, rich, distinguished, Montalbo had more than enough to excite the interest of numberless admiring women. In fact, more than all his literary triumphs, it was the legend of his "successes" that most aroused the envy of rival novelists and poets. On this subject, however, Montalbo preserved a discreet silence, meeting the comments of his friends and the malicious innuendoes of certain interviewers, with a modest, or an enigmatic smile.

But the quiet unadventurous years of his marriage had left him somehow extremely susceptible to feminine charms and the prey of an insatiable thirst for wild, intoxicating experiences. After writing about so many imaginary passions in his novels he was keen at last to live one! Was he not free to follow every caprice? With his wife, every cause for scruple had died! Unrestrained, he made his way from "affair" to "affair" with the exhilaration of a youth who finds in scandal itself only a subtle incense to vanity!

His new mode of life could not fail to encounter outraged anger in his family. His aged father-in-law Duprat, had died in the throes of alcohol, proclaiming to all who were willing to listen, that the famous Montalbo was a pot-boiler and a charlatan, and that he had murdered his wife in order to free himself for a dissolute life. The children, it is true, loved him, but with the affection of youngsters for an older brother, whom they respected for his years but despised for his prodigality. Nevertheless Montalbo's generosity where his children were concerned knew no bounds.

"Money is the means to freedom," he would say on making them some handsome gift. "Only he who can give money away by the fistful is really free."

Of his two children, his son was of a grave methodical nature like Matilde's, with small interest in anything but the so-called "exact sciences." He had become

an engineer and had gone to a French colony in Asia, where, alone and unmarried, he was pursuing his one ambition of making, through land developments, a fortune even larger than his father's. It was Montalbo's daughter who had inherited his own exuberant vitality and lively imagination. He had made a match for her with a young army officer of distinguished family and she and her husband were now living in a garrison in a provincial town, where the name of Montalbo cast a beam of glory on the young couple.

With his family thus well " established " what more had Montalbo to wish for? He could say to himself in moments of depression: " Everything I ever wished for has come to me; not always perhaps exactly as I wished, but sooner or later, and in one form or another. Not a single one of my boyhood ambitions has failed to come true! " . . .

And yet, was he happy? The more often Montalbo asked himself that question, the more certainly he could find but one answer:

No! He was not happy. . . .

V

THE great man spent an hour or so every morning with his secretary, Louis Crovetto, a young Marseillais of Italian parentage, who gave his services to the famous author more out of hero-worship than for any tangible reward he received. The boy had come to Paris for the sole purpose of meeting the poet. Won by such honest enthusiasm for his writings, Montalbo adopted a kindly paternal attitude towards the young aspirant to literary fame, who soon became a member of the author's working staff. Montalbo's chief affliction was the deluge of letters and postcards he received from all over the world. Apparently the globe is populated with men and women who, when they have read a book they like, feel impelled to write about it to the author, each one of them naïvely imagining that he or she is the only reader to whom such an original idea has occurred.

" Luigi," as the poet called his secretary, disposed of this overwhelming task each day—and with characteristic Italian resourcefulness. He had worked out a very good imitation of his employer's signature, and a number of " observations "—supposedly the poet's original remarks. Crovetto would not have dared to insert one of these epigrams in his own first novel, for fear of being indicted as a " fossil " by critics of the rising generation. " Signed " by Montalbo, however, such replies aroused intense enthusiasm in their recipients, who deemed them " very profound," and " so characteristic " of Montalbo's extraordinary genius!

While Crovetto attended to the correspondence of a social or personal nature, Montalbo entrusted his business letters to his old friend Soudre.

How had Soudre come to be on such intimate terms with the great man of letters? Montalbo could scarcely say, yet without this man he had never yet made a truly important decision in connexion with his complicated affairs. Vaguely he remembered a certain morning when an amusing fellow, chattering incessantly, and with an air of great authority, had presented himself under pretext of reading to the " mæstro " " a passage or two " from his own great (but unpublished) novel. What the novel was, Montalbo was destined never to know, because Soudre never finished with his introduction of himself. Yet Montalbo had liked the man, who had repeated his visits so persistently that the poet had grown accustomed to him, coming to depend on his presence much as he did on that of his young secretary (towards whom, by the way, Soudre at once assumed a condescending air tinged with affectionate tolerance).

The history of this new friend, Montalbo pieced together little by little from Soudre's innumerable anecdotes. Apparently the man had been an attorney in a small provincial town—one of the innumerable famished lawyers who hang about the courts, picking a bare living through their skill in making the tortuosities of the law provide new cases, or serve as excuses for renewing old ones. At his wife's death Soudre had yielded, without further resistance, to a demon of literary ambition which had been possessing him all his life, and betook himself with his manuscripts and an only daughter to Paris.

Faustina, a girl of eighteen, was an enterprising creature with most of the virtues of the ambitious poor—she knew, for instance, how to dress exceedingly well on exceedingly little money. Her youthful graces, at any rate, were only the

covering for a temperament as restless and avid as her father's.

Montalbo, who took some pride in his acumen as a psychologist—believing that his books were justly admired on this ground at least, thought he discerned something of this resemblance one day as he was watching the girl's eyes while she stood absorbed for a moment in thought. But when she turned her gaze upon him, he had come to a different conclusion—that Faustina was, after all, much like young girls he had described in his novels, simple-hearted creatures, easily imposed on, capable of the greatest sacrifices for the parents to whom they unquestioningly submitted their wills.

Certainly her presence in the house, whither Soudre often brought her, seemed very pleasant to the poet. The girl did not, strictly speaking, possess great beauty, and yet, wherever she went, she seemed to stand out from the other women about her. It was on her the glances of the men always converged. She had a talent for house-management comparable only to her father's special gifts for handling " large affairs " of a business nature—gifts too much neglected by those who might have used them to advantage (so that he was forced to employ them in spheres quite beneath his true deserts). Certainly most of his comfort, much of the freedom he enjoyed from the irksome details of house-keeping he owed to her ; just as he had to confess that, thanks to Soudre, his income was always increasing by leaps and bounds without worry or thought on his part. Naturally this state of affairs made him respond even more generously than he would otherwise have done to Soudre's periodic requests for financial aid. " Parasite " said envious tongues, accusing the poet's factotum of bartering for his " influence " and even of selling introductions to the famous man. Eventually Soudre had abandoned his rôle of man of letters and assumed the genial self-confidence of the successful financier.

When, at the first breath of autumn, Montalbo went to his château on the Loire, Soudre and his daughter were usually invited to accompany him. On some mornings, while Soudre and Montalbo talked business, Faustina and Crovetto, equal in years and in youthful spirit, would be roaming about through the gardens, like two characters from one of the author's novels, the bronze-hued carpet of dry leaves that lay heaped in the tree-shaded walks crackling under their feet. And during the winters, father and daughter would take a trip to the Riviera as a surprise to their famous friend, who would put them up with him at his luxurious hotel. Montalbo was always glad to see them. Now that his family had scattered, he needed companionship. These people whose acquaintance he had made only a few years before filled a void in his life. He even chided them for lack of consideration when they let a few days pass without favouring him with a visit.

But Crovetto was growing restless. Just as a priest, however wholehearted his adoration for the miraculous image he worships, eventually grows weary of divinity and hungers for contact with humble souls like himself, the young man began to crave the socicty of the comrades of his own age whom he had abandoned for a while. About the same time, as it chanced, Soudre became absorbed in some new enterprises—they were to make him a millionaire, of course—and came less and less frequently to the author's house. Faustina possessed innumerable friends and had an unquenchable thirst for diversion. She was always going to concerts, teas and balls, and made good use of the theatre tickets which her father acquired from all quarters, thanks to his well-advertised intimacy with the poet, Montalbo.

A general desertion ! And Montalbo became suddenly aware of his tedium and his solitude—things which he had never experienced before. All his life long he had worked for long hours each day in the silence and isolation of his study. But now he had said most of what he had to say. He was writing less ; and the hours suddenly grew longer. There was an empty space in his life. He must fill it ! . . . But how ?

As his pen first began to grow more idle and his days of rest more numerous than his days of work, the gallant adventures which had added the piquancy of scandal to his great renown had sufficed to amuse and divert him. But now this form of recreation was failing him too. For one thing its charm had gone. He was finding it monotonous.

When people marvelled at the youthful appearance which belied his actual years, the great man always took occasion to

expound the theory which governed his life :

" Being young is an act of will," he would say. " Anyone who really wills to be young, is sure to remain so. Determination is the important thing. The kingdom of youth is within us ! Old ? I shall never be old ! When I am eighty, I shall put on a blonde wig, and elope with a chorus girl ! "

Though, to be sure, behind this philosophy of gaiety lurked a sombre mood. For Montalbo human existence was really a grey-tinted canvas, and mankind's greatest gift lay in knowing how to cover it up under bright and pleasure-giving colours, that the children of men might ignore its inner tragedy, mercifully deceiving themselves and one another !

" Illusion and desire," he would say to himself, " are the two themes, the only themes, played by the orchestra which each of us has in his soul. When the musicians reach the end of the one score, we must hurry to put the other on the racks in front of them—otherwise . . ." Otherwise . . . ! The fact was, that the great man had lately made a dreadful discovery. Those two tunes he had been hearing over and over again. Neither one of them now had for him the slightest charm of novelty. The occasion might be different, but it was always the same old music, and instead of inspiring him, and lending him the energy of enthusiasm, it merely soothed him with the monotonies inseparable from nauseous repetition.

" Give me something else, please ! " Would he never again experience the thrill of new harmonies, the excitement of turning the leaves of a new " partition," as yet uncopyrighted, as yet unplayed, fresh, stirring as the untrodden depths of the primeval forest ? Alas ! Every one of his adventures in emotion, begun with bated breath and the thrill of mystery, ended either in the banalities of a sidewalk music-box or in a grotesque discord.

But one day, in a fit of ill-humoured discontent with the conditions of his life, Montalbo hit upon a remedy.

" Youth is an act of will," he reminded himself, and he repeated the apophthegm, " Youth is an act of will—and I will to be young. From this day on I shall avoid every contact with age. A simpler life hereafter ! I shall have quite enough to do in forgetting my years."

And then he added, with the resolution of a man accustomed to translating thought into action :

" Come, let's go out in search of youth ! "

VI

AS a specialist in romantic psychology, Montalbo had many a time taken the human heart to pieces to see its inner mechanism. And he had made a list of observations as to the beginnings of love. " Sometimes it is at a first glance that a woman and man discover their mutual attraction. Then again they are friends for years, only to discover some day to their amazement that the bond between them has changed—that it is love . . ."

In this long catalogue, there was one mode of amorous development for which the poet had a particular liking. Several times in his own life he had experienced it, subsequently taking pleasure in retracing it in the characters of his novels. A man treats a woman with indifference for months, perhaps for years. Then at last, one night, he sees her in his dreams. Thereafter she appears to have changed, to be different from other women, to be beautified. . . . He goes on dreaming about her, and then, suddenly, he is in love. . . .

It was the night following his resolve to go out in search of youth that the novelist saw a woman in his dreams. And the woman was Faustina, daughter of the invaluable Soudre !

This, the first episode in his quest, struck him as something comic. Youth, yes, well and good ! . . . but he had never thought of going to such extremes. Why, the girl was nineteen ! Give her five or six more years, and he would still be old enough to be her grandfather ! And yet . . . after this dream of his, Faustina was no longer in his eyes the girl she had formerly been. In his imagination she stood out in heightened relief, and in colours that she had never before suggested to him.

Until then he had accepted her rather absently, as a matter of course. Soudre's daughter ! As far as he was concerned, she had been just an ordinary young woman of a poor family, who " dressed like an artist " or rather over-dressed, by way of concealing her humble estate. At times she had inspired in him a feeling of pity as he compared her with the great ladies who

invited him to their luxurious homes and sought to give the impression that they were something more to him than his hostesses. But now he began to discover in " the little Soudre," as he used to call her, a certain arresting charm—as it were the mordant perfume of those meadow flowers which the peasant finds along the hedgerows, and which mean to him that spring has come. He even marvelled that an observer of his keenness had not earlier become aware of the girl's attractiveness.

His dreams continued. Every morning Faustina took on a new beauty, a new grace in his eyes. The difference in their ages came no longer to shock the novelist so profoundly. In the biographies of many famous writers he found instances of happy adjustments of even greater discrepancies in age. Why so extraordinary that he should fall in love with " the little Soudre," if doing so brought happiness to his now lonely existence? Old? After all, he wasn't so old! Sixty something. . . . Nothing much for a man rich enough to avail himself of all modern resources for the care of health! Nothing much, either, for a celebrity! Who ever heard of a man who was famous and not at least sixty? . . . As for love, there was Goethe! Goethe at eighty—at eighty, if you please—inspired a passion in Bettina von Arnim, a young chit of eighteen. Of course, Bettina von Arnim had a passion for literature, and literary people are capable of the craziest pranks!

" But ' the little Soudre ' has talent, too," Montalbo reassured himself. " If she wanted to write, she could do it quite well. . . . Like her father, she has a marked gift for literary expression. . . ."

The great man's optimism, embracing even Faustina's father, continued to increase until finally one by one it choked all the objections raised by his critical faculties. Step by step his good sense retreated—withdrawing into the depths of his being with protests ever feebler.

His characteristic vehemence soon betrayed the turn in his feelings to anyone who had an eye to see. He moved jauntily about in a certain childlike joy, as though the very air were singing to his ears, as though the daylight about him had suddenly become suffused with rosy colours. At last that orchestra in his soul had struck up a real tune—something new, something original, promising rich and untried harmonies!

The first person to perceive what was going on in Montalbo's mind was Faustina herself. The great man had no need to speak. The look in his eyes, the tones of his voice, his attentiveness to her slightest wishes, were enough. The notion had surprised her at first. Then she smiled quietly to herself. The impossible was about to happen! Even her father, absorbed in his own affairs as he was, suddenly perceived the affectionate intimacy that marked his host's manner towards Faustina. At luncheon one day the novelist lost no opportunity to caress the girl's hands as he spoke of the great interest he had always taken in her. And " the little Soudre," with the quiet audaciousness of the young person who is poor and has to make her way all alone in the world without counting much on father, sat looking at the famous man with great, admiring eyes, and reciprocated his falsely paternal caresses by burying her small hands in his leonine locks, or commenting flatteringly on his youthfulness.

Soudre knitted his eyebrows—a trick he had whenever his mind alighted on one of those " ideas " which were sure to bring in a million. Here was something—and it " looked good."

Crovetto was away in the south of France, attending to the settlement of an inheritance that had come to him through his father's recent death. During his absence it was only natural that Faustina and her father should multiply their visits to their famous friend that he should not feel so lonely!

Montalbo was transformed. He had always dressed with elegance. But suddenly his tailor, a workman of international repute, seemed to him far too conservative, far too much behind the times. After a glance at some of the writers of the younger literary generation—friends of Crovetto—who were anticipating future celebrity for their wits by attracting attention meanwhile to their flamboyant neckties and to the exaggerated cut of their attire, Montalbo transferred his patronage to a tailor frequented by the successful actors of the comedy stage.

Gossip was soon busy with these exciting events. Montalbo, now a mannequin for the most startling sartorial innovations, was daily sporting new costumes of the most youthful line—and carrying them off, too, with the self-assurance of a dandy of the younger set!

A glint in Faustina's eyes acknowledged this metamorphosis, which she accepted as

all in homage to her; and Soudre in his conversations with the great man always took occasion to conclude with defences of marriage, as affording after all the most propitious atmosphere for real work, and as the last chapter in every successful career.

Montalbo had as yet made no overt declaration, but Faustina was already assuming an air of authority in his establishment, and treating the servants as their future mistress; and her father was now directing the great man's affairs quite as though they were his own.

In the autumn all three took a trip to the South to be present at an open air performance, in the ruins of a Roman theatre, of Montalbo's great tragedy, "The Conquistadores" (a work inspired no doubt by the thought of his ancestor, the navigator, and dedicated to the pioneers of Spain).

"Let's all go," said Montalbo, when the invitation reached him. "Luigi will run up from Marseilles and stay with us." And he smiled. Fortune was giving and promising so much! Here awaiting him was a public triumph, a triumph which he could share with Faustina! Happiness seemed nestling under his hand!

The great man and his guests were welcomed by the little Provençal city with extraordinary honours. Dressed in white clothes that would have been suitable at a beach resort, Montalbo received the attentions heaped upon his party with smiling good nature. The natives were astonished and delighted at the extreme condescension of the celebrity. The great man was always escaping from the formal festivities to talk to the villagers he met in the streets!

"Who is the young demoiselle?" Montalbo heard some of the peasant women asking of each other.

"She's his daughter, of course," said someone who pretended to know. And after that Faustina was greeted everywhere as the author's daughter, and found herself awarded a generous share in her "illustrious father's" glory.

Never had Montalbo felt so satisfied with life. On the day of the performance, while dining on a balcony of the hotel, and still intoxicated with the applause of at least twenty thousand spectators, he silenced a last scruple and proposed to Faustina that she become his wife.

"The little Soudre" hesitated, as though the long-awaited suggestion were coming as a surprise. Then she closed her eyes, brushed her eyelids with her fingers to restrain a tear, and slowly moved her head up and down—"Yes!"—to let it fall on the great man's shoulder as though she were about to die of joy at the thought of offering him her lips.

Another triumph! And it filled the old poet with as much pride as the success of his tragedy. Soudre's daughter was willing to marry him! How could he do something worthy of the occasion?

The next morning they were all four walking down the main street of the town where some workmen were mending the pavement. Intent on the young woman's face, Montalbo tripped over a wheelbarrow left standing on the sidewalk. . . . But the near-accident inspired in him a whimsical idea.

"Get in!" he said to Faustina. "I'll give you a ride, in front of all these people!"

The idea was not original, of course. He remembered that another famous man, of his own age, too, a man named Wagner, had done that very thing for a woman who was later to become his wife.

Reddening with pride at this homage, the girl jumped into the wheelbarrow. Think of it! The great Montalbo assuming for her the rôle of rickshaw runner in the presence of the leading citizens of a French town!

Crovetto made a gesture of protest.

"*Maître*, you are joking!"

But Montalbo was not joking. In scandalized silence the passers-by watched the extraordinary scene. But those sturdy countrymen of the South were not altogether astonished at what they saw. A crazy lot, all of them, these artists and writers from the capital!

VII

THE news began to circulate through Paris. Montalbo was marrying again! . . . And all the fashionable women who had memories of intimacy with the great man, feverishly asked for details from the newsmongers around the tea tables.

"Who is this Soudre person, anyway? . . . She has nothing at all, you know, except her youth." "Of course, that's what attracted him." "No, my dear, she's really very clever . . . why, think of it! Capturing a man who is a past master of feminine psychology!" "Strange the attraction the cradle has for the grave . . ."

—this from young authors—" Lucky man, Crovetto, eh ? . . ."

Apparently the only person in Paris who considered this marriage a natural and logical thing was Montalbo himself. No longer did he speak of fame as the " sun of the dead." Now, rather he knew that it was one of those burning stars that shower energising rays on the dark bodies of the heavens, drawing these into their own systems, and forcing them into their own orbits. He had no illusions, no ! He was too keen an observer. He knew perfectly well that a young woman like Faustina could accept a man of his years only when he could offer fame as compensation for the youth he no longer possessed. But . . . he was Montalbo ! And a Montalbo had a right to ask even for a love which any ordinary man must do without when the years have set their mark on him.

As for Soudre, the marriage could not be celebrated a day too soon. He feared a sober second thought on the " master's " part. The poet might," like any confounded bourgeois," change his mind and draw back from the adventure.

But just when Faustina's father began talking of dates for the ceremony, and was skilfully imparting to the newspapers supposedly " indiscreet " revelations of the coming event, so as to cut off any possible avenue of retreat still left to the great man, difficulties began to arise.

Montalbo's daughter had been patiently waiting for her father to give up his pursuit of pleasures and settle down in frank acceptance of his years. She had thought to instal herself in his establishment and to begin interesting him in his grandchildren. Now here he was on the point of marrying again ! Preposterous ! She grew indignant. Of her father's impulsive nature, and like him inclined occasionally to act with a precipitation verging on violence, she wrote him a letter assuring him that she had always thought him an irresponsible child in the management of his affairs, and she was not surprised to hear that he had once more allowed himself to be taken in by the first scheming hussy who crossed his path.

From his son, too, Montalbo received a laconic letter, which coldly and concisely pointed out the lack of propriety in his father's intended marriage, but recognized his right to make himself the laughing stock of the whole world if he so elected.

Crovetto's return to Paris somewhat consoled the poet for these unpleasant incidents. How true it was that children were ungrateful ! He had never opposed one of their wishes. He had never once set a price on his fatherly affection and indulgence. . . . But relatives are relatives ! . . . Thank Heaven, he had another and more real family to fall back on, a family formed by a free and deliberate choice of his own, and not the mere accidents of birth ! Faustina, so affectionate and gentle ! Her father, whose intelligence added to other qualities made him a delightful friend ! Luigi Crovetto, so faithful, so full of enthusiasm ! These were his real family !

But this family, too, began giving him cause for worry ! Luigi wasn't the Luigi he had been before he went away. He seemed to have the same admiration and respect for " the master," but his moral support was altogether too taciturn ! The old expansiveness was gone. Somehow the boy didn't hold his head as high as he once did. He avoided looking at the poet, seemed always out of sorts, and his replies consisted chiefly of grunts. And whenever Faustina began talking to him, Montalbo, famous novelist and husband-to-be though he was, Crovetto always found a pretext for leaving the room.

Yet the young man seemed ready enough to talk to Faustina when she was alone ! Through the high windows of his study Montalbo often saw his secretary hurry down the garden path to meet Faustina at a first glimpse of her walking under the trees at the far end.

And when Crovetto was present, it was Soudre, too, who was off colour, relapsing into moody silences and addressing Luigi when he spoke at all with a certain strange asperity. Perhaps Soudre was trying in advance to mark a difference between a famous man's son-in-law and a mere secretary ! Or perhaps his notions of propriety were bruised by the young man's habit of seeking Faustina's company the moment she had left the man who was so soon to be her husband.

Winter came on, very gradually. The afternoons grew cold in the Passy garden. Above the trees, the sun glowed small, round, red as a persimmon, through veils of fog. Or sometimes it disappeared completely in a gloomily livid sky.

Yet, in spite of the cold, Faustina still insisted on taking her walks in the garden,

even if only for a brief half hour, and Crovetto always found an excuse for leaving his work and going out to attend her. But, skilled observer as he was in situations involving others, Montalbo would never have attached any alarming significance to these meetings in the garden had not Soudre's uneasiness awakened his own.

One day, standing at his window, he spied Faustina and Crovetto seated side by side on a bench beyond the fountain, and his memory took a violent leap backward through the years! The Luxemburg, as it had been in those days! . . . Two young people ridiculously attired in a fashion long since forgotten! . . . Himself and Matilde sitting at his side!

Montalbo felt an oppressing anxiety sweep over him. Crovetto! Crovetto was young, just as he himself had been in that far-away time. . . .

Yes, he was jealous! Suddenly he found himself tiptoeing cautiously down the leaf-strewn paths—a crackle might betray him! He stopped in a little avenue opening on the circle where the two young people were sitting.

Crovetto was speaking in a loud voice, angrily, defiantly, confident that only one pair of ears could hear him.

"I'm jealous, yes. I'm jealous, I don't deny it. . . . You do love him, in spite of what you say. I can understand that. He's a famous man. The whole world knows him. I admire him even while I hate him! He has done me mortal harm in stealing you, and yet I can't help believing in his greatness. Oh, I can understand how you feel! Why, the man is a celebrity—he has all that I lack—recognition!"

His own very words! Just like himself thirty-eight years before! The same words . . . the same situation! Faith—and sincerity! The power to admire even a rival's greatness had not died! . . .

A girl's ringing mirth echoed for a moment under the arching trees.

"What is fame to me? . . . How can I love a man old enough to be my father . . . my grandfather? I love you, Luigi . . . no one else. But you are a dreamer, a child, and you don't understand!"

Again the same! Again the past! Faustina's face was the gentle, saddened face of his own Matilde!

But Faustina went on. Montalbo could see that she had taken the boy's hand and was stroking it comfortingly. She had lowered her head towards him and her lips were touching his face.

"Don't take on that way, Luigi! Let me marry Montalbo. What will you lose? We shall be living under the same roof!"

Oh! Oh! But Matilde had not said that! She had not said that! Yes, it was true, the years had brought some progress! The young people of to-day were different . . . in spite of everything!

Montalbo drew back in terror. He dared not hear another word! He felt like running, but where? Anywhere so long as it was away from that spot! But the pain in his breast somehow grew less sharp as he moved away, and his head seemed to clear in proportion as he increased the distance between himself and the bench where the two young people were sitting. Then suddenly he grew cold. . . .

He thought of his books. It was as though the men and women he had created in his novels were rushing to him at this critical juncture in his life, hurrying back in eagerness to advise him.

And he understood in a flash! Old? Yes, he was old! Youth was holding the stage! From now on he must play the part of the kindly, understanding old man, the ancient and smiling patriarch who after a stormy career dedicates his experience to youth.

And, with the swift vision of the man of imagination, he saw at once the admirable possibilities of his new rôle! Too bad Faustina had laughed like that! Too bad she had said just that last thing! And yet he would not put her out of his life. He would continue to love her, but in another, in a sounder, more proper fashion! They would live under the same roof, those two young people and he. But Faustina would not be his wife. She would be the wife of Luigi. Youth with youth . . . and as to fame! . . .

Again he felt that icy wind! But now the dry leaves were moving slightly at the cold breath of the winter evening.

He must have warmth! Where was the sun? He did not wince as he gazed full at the red lozenge hanging low in the wintry sky. How chill, and wan, and pale it was! The sun of winter! The symbol of glory!

And he knew that the cold star for whose beams men have fought from the beginning of time with all their strength, all their astuteness, all their envy, would henceforth furnish his only sunlight—"the sunlight of the dead!"

POINTS OF VIEW——

From "Easy Virtue"

By NOEL COWARD

[As played at The Duke of York's Theatre, London.]

"IF there's any chance of helping someone to see the truth, I consider it shirking to disregard the opportunity."

"It's always rather an anti-climax, isn't it?—arriving anywhere."

"Things are certain to turn out all right if you don't worry about 'em."

"I've got an unworthy passion for popularity—it hurts my vanity not to be an unqualified success."

"It's certainly astonishing how quickly one becomes disillusioned over everything."

"Marcel Proust happens to be one of the few really brilliant novelists in the world."

"There's nothing so hideously dull as watching people play games you're not particularly interested in."

"If you're going to be magnanimous, do it gracefully."

"When the first fine careless rapture (of love) wears off, other things begin to obtrude themselves—one has to readjust oneself to see clearly."

"I've never noticed him trying to be funny—he's a very intelligent man."

"We've grown used to one another, so to alleviate the monotony we start prying about behind the scenes—trying to find out things about each other . . . It's inevitable with such a hideously intimate relationship as marriage."

"What's the use of being in the world at all if you shut your eyes to things?"

"There are so many varying opinions as to what is straight and decent."

"I don't jeer at religion—but I jeer at hypocrisy."

"You must be careful with your compliments. If you go peppering them about they'll lose value."

"An observant mind is painful sometimes, isn't it?"

"Love will always be the most dominant and absorbing subject in the world because it's so utterly inexplicable. Experience can teach you to handle it superficially, but not to explain it."

"Being modern only means twisting things into different shapes."

"The sort of women who infest French watering places are far from being 'frightfully sweet.'"

Afterwards

He lacked, not love—but imagination

By IAN MACLAREN

HE received the telegram in a garden where he was gazing on a vision of blue set in the fronds of a palm and listening to the song of the fishers as it floated across the bay.

"You look so utterly satisfied," said his hostess in the high, clear voice of Englishwomen, "that I know you are tasting the luxury of a contrast. The Riviera is charming in December; imagine London, and Cannes is Paradise."

As he smiled assent in the grateful laziness of a hard-worked man, his mind was stung with the remembrance of a young wife swathed in the dreary fog who, above all things, loved the open air and the shining of the sun.

Her plea was that Bertie would weary alone, and that she hated travelling, but it came to him quite suddenly that this was always the programme of their holidays—some Mediterranean villa, full of clever people, for him, and the awful dullness of that Bloomsbury street for her; or he went North to a shooting-lodge, where he told his best stories in the smoking-room, after a long day on the purple heather; and she did her best for Bertie at some watering-place, much frequented on account of its railway facilities and economical lodgings. Letters of invitation had generally a polite reference to his wife—"If Mrs. Trevor can accompany you I shall be still more delighted"—but it was understood that she would not accept.

"We have quite a grudge against Mrs. Trevor, because she will never come with her husband; there is some beautiful child who monopolizes her," his hostess would explain on his arrival; and Trevor allowed it to be understood that his wife was quite devoted to Bertie, and would be miserable without him.

When he left the room, it was explained: "Mrs. Trevor is a hopelessly quiet person—what is called a 'good wife' you know."

"The only time she dined with us, Tottie Fribbyl—he was a Theosophist then, it's two years ago—was too amusing for words, and told us what incarnation he was going through.

"Mrs. Trevor, I believe, had never heard of Theosophy, and looked quite horrified at the idea of poor Tottie's incarnation.

"'Isn't it profane to use such words?' she said to me. So I changed to skirt dancing, and would you believe me, she had never seen it?

"What can you do with a woman like that? Nothing remains but religion and the nursery. Why do clever men marry those impossible women?"

Trevor was gradually given to understand, as by an atmosphere, that he was a brilliant man wedded to a dull wife, and there were hours—his worst hours—when he agreed.

Cara mia, cara mia, sang the sailors; and his wife's face in its perfect refinement and sweet beauty suddenly replaced the Mediterranean.

Had he belittled his wife, with her wealth of sacrifice and delicate nature, beside women in spectacles who wrote on the bondage of marriage, and leaders of fashion who could talk of everything from horse-racing to palmistry?

He had only glanced at her last letter; now he read it carefully:

"The flowers were lovely, and it was so mindful of you to send them, just like my husband. Bertie and I amused ourselves arranging and rearranging them in glasses, till we had made our tea-table lovely. But I was just one little bit disappointed not to get a letter—you see how exacting I am, sir. 'I waited for every post, and Bertie said, has father's letter come yet?' When one is on holiday, writing letters is an awful bore; but please just a line to Bertie and me. We have a map of the Riviera, and found out all the places you have visited in the yacht; and we tried to imagine you sailing on the

azure sea, and landing among those silver olives.

"I am so grateful to everyone for being kind to you, and I hope you will enjoy yourself to the full. Bertie is a little stronger, I'm sure; his cheeks were quite rosy to-day for him. It was his birthday on Wednesday, and I gave him a little treat. The sun was shining brightly in the forenoon, and we had a walk in the Gardens, and made believe that it was Italy! Then we went to Oxford Street, and Bertie chose a regiment of soldiers for his birthday present. He wished some guns so much that I allowed him to have them as a present from you. They only cost one-and-sixpence, and I thought you would like him to have something. Jane and he had a splendid game of hide-and-seek in the evening, and my couch was the den, so you see we have our own gaiety in Bloomsbury.

"Don't look sulky at this long scribble and say, 'What nonsense women write!' for it is almost the same as speaking to you, and I shall imagine the letter all the way till you open it in the sunshine.

"So smile and kiss my name, for this comes with my heart's love from

"Your devoted wife,

"MAUD TREVOR.

"P.S.—Don't be alarmed because I have to rest; the doctor does not think that there is any danger, and I'll take great care."

¶

"A TELEGRAM." It was the shattering of a dream. "How wicked of some horrid person. Business ought not to be allowed to enter Paradise. Let's hope it's pleasure; perhaps someone has won a lot of money at Monte Carlo and wishes us to celebrate the affair."

"Who is it for? Oh! Mr. Edward Trevor; then it's a brief by telegram, I suppose. Some millionaire's will case, and the Attorney-General can't manage it alone. What a man he is, to have briefs in holiday time.

"There it is, but remember, before you open it, that you are bound to remain here over Christmas at any rate, and help us with our theatricals. My husband declares that a successful barrister must be a born actor." . . . .

An hour later Trevor was in the Paris express, and for thirty hours he prayed one petition, that she might live till he arrived. He used to have a berth in the Wagon Lit as a matter of course, and had begun to complain about the champagne in the dining-car, but the thought of comfort made him wince on this journey, and he twice changed his carriage, once when an English party would not cease from badinage that mocked his ears, and again because a woman had brown eyes with her expression of dog-like faithfulness. The darkness of the night after that sunlit garden, and the monotonous roar of the train, and the face of smiling France covered with snow, and the yeasty waters of the Channel, and the moaning of the wind, filled his heart with dread.

Will that procession of luggage at Dover never come to an end? A French seaman—a fellow with ear-rings and a merry face—appears and reappears with maddening regularity, each time with a larger trunk. One had X.Y. on it in big white letters. Why not Z. also? Who could have such a name? That is a lady's box, black and brown, plastered with hotel labels. Some bride, perhaps . . . . they are carrying the luggage over his heart. Have they no mercy?

The last piece is in, and the sailors make a merry group at the top of the gangway. They look like Bretons, and that fellow is laughing again—some story about a little child; he can just hear *Ma petite* . . .

"Guard, is this train never to start? We're half an hour late already."

"Italian mail very heavy, sir; still bringing up bags; so many people at the Riviera writing home to their friends."

How cruel everyone is! He had not written for ten days. Something always happened, an engagement of pleasure. There was a half-finished letter; he had left it to join a Monte Carlo party.

"Writing letters—home, of course, to that idolized wife. It's beautiful, and you are an example to us all; but Mrs. Trevor will excuse descriptions of scenery; she knows you are enjoying yourself."

Has she been expecting that letter from post to post, calculating the hour of each delivery, identifying the postman's feet in that quiet street, holding her breath when he rang, stretching her hand for a letter, to let it drop unopened, and bury her face in the pillow? Had she died waiting for a letter that never came? Those letters that he wrote from the Northern Circuit in that first sweet year, a letter a day, and one day

two—it had given him a day's advantage over her. Careful letters, too, though written between cases, with bits of description and amusing scenes. Some little sameness towards the end, but she never complained of that, and even said those words were the best.

And that trick he played—the thought of the postman must have brought it up—how pleasant it was, and what a success! He would be his own letter one day, and take her by surprise. "A letter, ma'am," the girl said—quite a homely girl who shared their little joys and anxieties—and then he showed his face with apologies for intrusion. The flush of love in her face, will it be like that to-night, or . . . . What can be keeping the train now? Is this a conspiracy to torment a miserable man?

He thrusts his head out of the window in despair, and sees the guard trying to find a compartment for a family that had mistaken their train.

The husband is explaining with English garrulity, all the station hearing, what an inconvenience it would have been had they gone in the Holborn Viaduct carriages.

"Half an hour's longer drive, you know, and it's very important we should get home in time; we are expected . . ."

For what? Dinner, most likely. What did it matter when they got home, to-day or next year? Yet he used to be angry if he were made late for dinner. They come into his compartment, and explain the situation at length, while he pretends to listen.

A husband and wife from a month in Italy, full of their experiences: the Corniche Road, the palaces of Genoa, the pictures in the Pitti, St. Peter's at Rome. Her first visit to the Continent, evidently; it reminded them of a certain tour round the Lakes in '80, and she withdrew her hand from her husband's as the train came out from the tunnel. They were not smart people—very pronounced middle-class—but they were lovers, after fifteen years.

They forgot him who was staring on the bleak landscape with white, pinched face.

"How kind to take me this trip. I know how much you denied yourself, but it has made me young again," and she said "Edward." Were all these coincidences arranged? Had his purgatorio begun already?

"Have you seen the paper, sir? Bosworth, M.P. for Pedlington, has been made a judge, and there's to be a keen contest.

"Trevor, I see, is named as the Tory candidate—a clever fellow, I've heard. Do you know about him? He's got on quicker than any man of his years. Some say that it's his manner; he's such a good sort, the juries cannot resist him, a man told me—a kind heart goes for something even in a lawyer. Would you like to look . . . .

"Very sorry; would you take a drop of brandy? No? The passage was a little rough, and you don't look quite up to the mark."

Then they left him in peace, and he drank his cup to the dregs.

¶

IT was for Pedlington he had been working and saving, for a seat meant society and the bench, perhaps . . . What did it matter now?

She was to come and sit within the cage when he had made his first speech, and hear all the remarks.

"Of course it will be a success, for you do everything well, and your wife will be the proudest woman in London.

"Sir Edward Trevor, M.P. I know it's foolish, but it's the foolishness of love, dear, so don't look cross; you are everything to me, and no one loves you as I do."

What are they slowing for now? There's no station. Did ever train drag like this one?

Off again, thank God . . . . if she only were conscious, and he could ask her to forgive his selfishness.

At last the train glides into Victoria. No, he had nothing to declare; would they let him go, or might they keep his luggage altogether?

Some vision was coming up, and now he saw her kneeling on the floor and packing that portmanteau, the droop of her figure, her thin white hands.

He was so busy that she did these offices for him—tried to buckle the straps even; but he insisted on doing that. It gave him half an hour longer at the Club. What a brute he had been . . . .

"Do anything you like with my things. I'll come to-morrow . . . as fast as you can drive."

Huddled in a corner of the cab so that you might have thought he slept, this man was calculating every foot of the way, gloating over a long stretch of open, glistening asphalt, hating unto

murder the immovable drivers whose huge vans blocked his passage. If they had known, there was no living man but would have made room for him . . . but he had not known himself . . . . Only one word to tell her he knew now.

As the hansom turned into the street he bent forward, straining his eyes to catch the first glimpse of home. Had it been daytime the blinds would have told their tale; now it was the light he watched.

Dark on the upper floors; no sick light burning . . . have mercy . . . then the blood came back to his heart with a rush. How could he have forgotten?

Their room was at the back for quietness, and it might still be well. Someone had been watching, for the door was instantly opened, but he could not see the servant's face.

A doctor came forward and beckoned him to go into the study . . .

It seemed as if his whole nature had been smitten with insensibility, for he knew everything without words, and yet he heard the driver demanding his fare, and noticed that the doctor had been reading the evening paper while he waited; he saw the paragraph about the seat.

What work those doctors have to do . . .

"It was an hour ago . . . we were amazed that she lived so long; with any other woman it would have been this morning; but she was determined to live till you came home.

"It was not exactly will-power, for she was the gentlest patient I ever had; it was" —the doctor hesitated—a peremptory Scotchman hiding a heart of fire beneath a coating of ice—"it was simply love."

When the doctor had folded up the evening paper, and laid it on a side table, which took some time, he sat down opposite that fixed, haggard face, which had not yet been softened by a tear.

"Yes, I'll tell you everything if you desire me; perhaps it will relieve your mind; and Mrs. Trevor said you would wish to know, and I must be here to receive you. Her patience and thoughtfulness were marvellous.

"I attend many very clever and charming women, but I tell you, Mr. Trevor, not one has so impressed me as your wife. Her self-forgetfulness passed words; she thought of everyone except herself; why, one of the last things she did was to give directions about your room; she was afraid you might feel the change from the Riviera. But that is by the way, and these things are not my business.

"From the beginning I was alarmed, and urged that you should be sent for; but she pledged me not to write; you needed your holiday, she said, and it must not be darkened with anxiety.

"She spoke every day about your devotion and unselfishness; how you wished her to go with you, but she had to stay with the boy . . . .

"The turn for the worst? It was yesterday morning, and I had Sir Reginald at once. We agreed that recovery was hopeless, and I telegraphed to you without delay.

"We also consulted whether she ought to be told, and Sir Reginald said, 'Certainly; that woman has no fear, for she never thinks of herself, and she will want to leave messages.'

"'If we can only keep her alive till to-morrow afternoon,' he said, and you will like to remember that everything known to the best man in London was done. Sir Reginald came back himself unasked to-day because he remembered a restorative that might sustain the failing strength. She thanked him so sweetly that he was quite shaken; the fact is, that both of us would soon have played the fool. But I ought not to trouble you with these trifles at this time, only as you wanted to know all. . . .

"Yes, she understood what we thought before I spoke, and only asked when you would arrive. 'I want to say "Good-bye," and then I will be ready,' but perhaps. . .

"'Tell you everything?' That is what I am trying to do, and I was here nearly all day, for I had hoped we might manage to fulfil her wish.

"No, she did not speak much, for we enjoined silence and rest as the only chance; but she had your photograph on her pillow, and some flowers you had sent.

"They were withered, and the nurse removed them when she was sleeping; but she missed them, and we had to put them in her hands. 'My husband was so thoughtful.'

"This is too much for you, I see; it is simply torture. Wait till to-morrow. . .

"Well, if you insist. Expecting a letter . . . yes . . . let me recollect . . .No, I am not hiding anything, but you must not let this get upon your mind.

"We have deceived her, but she knew the hour of the Continental mails, and could

detect the postman's ring. Once a letter came, and she insisted upon seeing it in case of any mistake. But it was only an invitation for you, I think, to some country house.

"It can't be helped now, and you ought not to vex yourself; but I believe a letter would have done more for her than . . . What am I saying now?

"As she grew weaker she counted the hours, and I left her at four full of hope. 'Two hours more and he'll be here,' and by that time she had your telegram in her hand.

"When I came back the change had come, and she said, 'It's not God's will; bring Bertie.'

"So she kissed him and said something to him, but we did not listen. After the nurse had carried him out—for he was weeping bitterly, poor little chap—she whispered to me to get a sheet of paper and sit down by her bedside. . . . I think it would be better . . . very well, I will tell you all.

"I wrote what she dictated with her last breath, and I promised you would receive it from her own hand, and so you will. She turned her face to the door and lay quite still till about six, when I heard her say your name very softly, and a minute afterwards she was gone, without pain or struggle." . . .

She lay as she had died, waiting for his coming, and the smile with which she had said his name was still on her face. It was the first time she did not colour with joy at his coming, that her hand was cold to his touch. He kissed her, but his heart was as though numbed, and he could not weep.

Then he took her letter and read it beside that silence.

"DEAREST,—

"They tell me now that I shall not live to see you come in and to cast my arms once more round your neck before we part. Be kind to Bertie, and remember that he is delicate and shy. He will miss me, and you will be patient with him for my sake. Give him my watch, and do not let him forget me.

My locket with your likeness I would like left on my heart. You will never know how much I have loved you, for I could never speak. You have been very good to me, and I want you to know that I am grateful; but it is better perhaps that I should die, for I might hinder you in your future life. Forgive me because I came short of what your wife should have been. None can ever love you better. You will take these poor words from a dead hand, but I shall see you, and I shall never cease to love you, to follow your life, to pray for you—my first, my only love."

The fountains within him were broken, and he flung himself down by the bedside in an agony of repentance.

"Oh, if I had known before; but now it is too late, too late!"

For we sin against our dearest not because we do not love, but because we do not imagine.

II

MAUD TREVOR was a genuine woman and kept her accounts with the aid of six purses. One was an ancient housewife of her grandmother's, which used to be equipped with silk and thread and needles and buttons, and from a secret place yielded to the third generation a bank note of value. This capacious receptacle was evidently intended for the household exchequer, whose transactions were innumerable, and whose monthly budget depended for success on an unfailing supply of copper. Another had come from her mother, and was of obsolete design—a bag closed at both extremities, with a long narrow slit in the middle, and two rings which compressed the gold into one end and the silver into the other. This was marked out by Providence for charity, since it made no provision for pennies, and laid a handicap of inconveniences on threepenny bits. It retained a subtle trace of an old-fashioned scent her mother loved, and recalled her mother going out on some errand of mercy—a St. Clare in her sacrifices and devotion.

Purse three descended from her father, and was an incarnation of business—made of chamois leather, with a steel clasp that closed with a click, having three compartments within, one of which had its own clasp and was reserved for gold. In this bank Maud kept the funds of a clothing society, whose more masterly bargains ran sometimes into farthings, and she was always haunted with anxiety lest a new farthing and a half sovereign should some day change places. A pretty little purse with ivory sides and silver hinges—a birthday gift of her girlhood—was large enough to hold her dress allowance,

which Trevor had fixed at a most generous rate when he had barely four hundred a year, and had since forgotten to increase. One in sealskin had been a gift of engagement days, and held the savings of the year against birthday and Christmas presents—whose contents were the subject of many calculations.

A cast-off purse of Trevor's had been devoted to Bertie, and from its resources came one way or other all he needed; but it happened that number six was constantly reinforced from the purse with the ivory sides.

Saturday afternoon was sacred to book-keeping, and Maud used her bed as a table for this critical operation, partly because it was so much larger than an escritoire, but chiefly because you could empty the purses into little pools with steep protecting banks. Of course if one sat down hurriedly there was great danger of amalgamation, with quite hopeless consequences; and Trevor held over Maud's head the chance of his making this mistake.

It was his way, before he grew too busy, to watch till the anxious face would suddenly brighten and a rapid change be made in the pools—the household contributing something to presents and the dress purse to Bertie, while private and public charity would then accommodate each other with change.

Caresses were strictly forbidden in those times of abstruse calculation, and the Evil One who stands at every man's elbow once tempted Trevor to roll the counterpane into a bundle—purses, money, and all—but Maud, when he confessed, said that no human being would be allowed to fall into such wickedness.

Trevor was obliged to open her wardrobe fourteen days after the funeral, and the first thing he lighted upon was purses. They lay in a row on an old account book—a motley set indeed—but, so absurd and tricky a spirit is pathos, they affected him more swiftly than the sight of a portrait. Was ever anyone so faithful and conscientious, so self-forgetful and kind, so capable also and clever in her own particular sphere?

Latterly he had sneered at the purses, and once, being vexed at something in a letter, he had told Maud she ought to have done with that folly and keep her accounts like an educated woman. "A girl of twelve would be ashamed." . . . What a merciless power memory wields. She only dropped her head . . . it was on the sealskin purse the tear fell, and at once he saw the bend of the Wye at Tintern where he had surprised her with the gift of that purse. He was moved to kiss away that tear, but his heart hardened.

Why could she not be like the women he knew? . . . Well, he would not be troubled any longer with her simple ways . . . he could do as he pleased now with the purses . . . A bitter madness of grief took possession of him, and he arranged them on the bed.

One was empty, the present purse, and he understood . . . the dress purse, of course, a little silver only. . . the rest had gone that he might have something beautiful. . . . He knew that it must be done sooner or later, and to-day was best, for his heart could be no sorer. . . . Yes, here they were, the ungiven gifts. For every person from himself to the nurse; all wrapped in soft white paper and ready in good time.

She used to arrange everything on Christmas Eve . . . this year he had intended to stay at Cannes . . . there would just have been Bertie and his mother; now . . . But he must open it—an inkstand for his study in solid brass, with pens and other things complete—he noted every detail as if to estimate its value.

It came back to him now how she had cunningly questioned him about his needs before he left for Cannes, till he grew impatient. "Don't bother me about ink-bottles." Yes, the very words, and others . . . the secret writing of memory came out of this sorrow. "Why won't women understand that a man can't answer questions about trifles when he has work on hand?" He could swear to the words, and he knew how Maud looked, although he did not see.

"Don't go away; you promised that you would sit beside me when I worked—hinder me? I suppose you are bidding for a kiss; you know the sight of your face inspires me." . . . That was ten years ago . . . he might have borne with her presence a little longer. . . . She never would come again . . . he would have no interruptions of that kind. . .

Her gloves, sixes—what a perfect hand it was (smooths out the glove). His memory brings up a dinner table. Mrs. Chatterby gives her opinion on Meredith's last novel, and helps herself to salt—he sees a disgusting hand, with stumpy fingers, and,

for impudence, a street arab of a thumb. A vulgar little woman through and through, and yet because she picked up scraps from the monthlies, and had the trick of catch-words, people paid her court. And he had sometimes thought, but he knew better to-day . . . of all things in the world a glove is the surest symbol. Mended, too, very neatly . . . that he might have his hansoms.

¶

IT was the last thing he ever could have imagined, and yet it must be a diary—Maud's diary! Turns over the leaves, and catches that woman's name against whom he has suddenly taken a violent dislike.

" January 25.—Was at Mrs. Chatterby's —how strange one does not say anything of her husband, yet he is the nicer of the two—and I think it will be better not to go again to dinner. One can always make some excuse that will not be quite untrue.

" ' The dinner is in honour of Mr. Fynical, who is leaving his college and coming to live in London to do literary work,' as Mrs. Chatterby has been explaining for weeks, ' and to give tone to the weeklies.'

" ' The younger men are quite devoted to him, and we ought all to be so thankful that he is to be within reach. His touch reminds one of '—I don't know the French writer, but she does not always give the same name. ' We hope to see a great deal of him. So delightfully cynical, you know, and hates the bourgeoisie.'

" I was terrified lest I should sit next Mr. Fynical, but Mrs. Chatterby was merciful and gave me Janie Godfrey's father. Edward says that he is a very able man, and will be Lord Chancellor some day, but he is so quiet and modest, that one feels quite at home with him. Last summer he was yachting on the west coast of Scotland, and he described the sunset over the Skye hills; and I tried to give him a Devonshire sunrise. We both forgot where we were, and then Mrs. Chatterby asked me quite loud, so that everyone looked, what I thought of ' Smudges.'

" The dinner-table seemed to wait for my answer, and I wished that the book had never come from the library, but I said that I had sent it back because it seemed so bitter and cruel, and one ought to read books which showed the noble side of life.

" ' You are one of the old-fashioned women,' she replied. ' You believe in a novel for the young person,' with a smile that hurt me, and I told her that I had been brought up on Sir Walter Scott. I was trying to say something about his purity and chivalry, when I caught Mr. Fynical's eye, and blushed red. If I had only been silent—for I'm afraid everyone was laughing, and Edward did not say one word to me all the way home.

" February 20.—Another ordeal, but not so unfortunate as the last. The Browne-Smythes are very kind friends, but I do think they are too much concerned about having clever people at their house. One evening Mrs. Browne-Smythe said she was happy because nothing had been talked about except translations of Homer. A certain guest was so miserable on that occasion that I begged Edward to leave me at home this time, but he said it would not be Greek again. It was science, however, and when we came in Mrs. Browne-Smythe was telling a very learned-looking person that she simply lived for fossils. A young lady beside me was talking about gases to a nervous man, who grew quite red, and tried to escape behind a table. I think she was wrong in her words, and he was too polite to correct her. To my horror he was obliged to take me in to dinner, and there never could have been two people more deserving of pity, for I was terrified of his knowledge, and he was afraid of my ignorance.

" We sat in perfect silence till a fatherly old man, quite like a farmer, on my left, began to talk to me so pleasantly that I described our country people, and was really sorry when the ladies had to leave. Edward says that he is one of the greatest discoverers in the world, and has all kinds of honours. We became so friendly that he has promised to take tea with me, and I think he does not despise my simplicity. How I long to be cleverer for Edward's sake, for I'm sure he must be ashamed of me among those brilliant women. I cannot blame him: I am proud of my husband.

" May 15.—I am quite discouraged, and have resolved never to go to any charitable committee again. Miss Tabitha Primmer used shameful language at the Magdalene meeting to-day, and Mrs. Wood-Ruler showed me that I had broken Law 43 by giving a poor girl personal aid. It seems presumptuous on my part to criticize such able and diligent workers, but my mother never spoke about certain subjects, and it is agony for me to discuss them. When the vicar

insisted on Sunday that thoughtful women were required for Christian service to-day, and that we must read up all kinds of books and know all kinds of painful things, my heart sank. It does not seem as if there was any place left for simple folk like me. Perhaps it would be better to give up going out altogether, and live for Edward and Bertie. I can always do something for them, and their love will be more than enough reward.

"Nov. 30.—I have not slept all night, for I made a dreadful mistake about a new book that everyone is reading, and Edward was so angry. He did not mean all he said, but he never called me a fool before. Perhaps he is right, and it is hard on him, who is so bright. Sometimes I wish——" And then there was no writing, only a tear mark . . .

Afterwards he opened the letters that had come since her death, and this is what he read:

"My dear Trevor,—

"The intelligence of Mrs. Trevor's death has given me a great shock of regret, and you will allow me to express my sympathy. Many men not given to enthusiasm had told me of her face and goodness, and before I had seen your wife I knew she was a very perfect type of womanliness. The few times I met her, Mrs. Trevor cast a certain spell over me—the nameless grace of the former days—and I felt myself unworthy of her presence.

"Once when a silly woman referred to one of the most miserable examples of decadent fiction, your wife spoke so nobly of true literature that I was moved to thank her, but I gathered from her face that this would not be acceptable. It seemed that to me the mask had fallen from a beautiful soul, and one man at least, in whom there is too little reverence, took the shoes from off his feet. Pardon me if I have in any way exceeded, and

"Believe me,

"Yours faithfully,

"Bernard Fynical."

The next was from the F.R.S.

"My dear Sir,—

"It is quite wrong for me, a stranger, to intrude on your grief, but I am compelled to tell you that an old fellow who only spoke to your wife once, had to wipe his spectacles over the *Times* this morning. It came about this way. The lady I had taken in to dinner at the Browne-Smythes gabbled about science till I lost my temper, and told her it would be a good thing if women would keep to their own sphere. Your wife was on the other side, and I turned to her in despair. She delighted me by confessing utter ignorance of my subject, and then she won my heart by some of the loveliest stories of peasant life in Devonshire I ever heard, so full of insight and delicacy.

"If the parsons preached like that I would be in church next Sunday. She put me in mind of a sister I lost long ago—who had the same low, soft voice and honest, trusty eyes. When she found I was a lonely man, your wife had pity on me and asked me to call on her. But I had to go to America, and only returned two days ago. I intended to wish her a Happy New Year, but it's too late. I cannot get you out of my mind, and I thought it might comfort you to know how a fossil like myself was melted by that kind heart.

"Believe me, my dear sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"Archibald Gilmore."

The third was also from a man, but this time a lad in rooms whom Trevor had seen at the house.

"Dear Mr. Trevor,—

"You perhaps know that Mrs. Trevor allowed me to spend an hour with her of an evening, when I felt downhearted or had any trouble, but no one will ever know how much she did for me. When I came up to London my faith began to go, and I saw that in a short time I would be an Agnostic. This did not trouble me so much on my own account as my mother's, who is dead, and made me promise something on her death-bed. So I bought books and heard sermons on unbelief till I was quite sick of the whole business.

"Mrs. Trevor took me to hear your own clergyman, who did not help me one bit, for he was too clever and logical; but you remember I came home with you, and after you had gone to your study I told Mrs. Trevor my difficulties, and she did me more good than all the books. She never argued nor preached, but when I was with her I felt that religion was a reality, and that she knew more about it than anyone I had met since I lost my mother. It is a shame to trouble you with my story when you are in such sorrow, and no one need tell you how noble a woman Mrs. Trevor was; but I

could not help letting you know that her goodness has saved one young fellow at least from infidelity and worse.

"You will not mind my having sent a cross to put on the coffin; it was all I could do. "Yours gratefully,

"GEORGE BENSON."

There was neither beginning nor end to the fourth letter, but it was written in a lady's hand.

"I am a clergyman's daughter, who left her father's house and went astray. I have been in the Inferno, and have seen what I read in Dante while I was innocent. One day the old rectory rose up before my eyes—the roses hanging over my bedroom window; the birds flying in and out the ivy; my father on the lawn, aged and broken through my sin—and I resolved that my womanhood should no longer be dragged in the mire.

"My house was closed years ago, I had no friends, so I went in my desperation to a certain Institute, and told my case to the matron. She was not unkindly, but the committee were awful, without either sympathy or manners; and when an unmarried woman wished to pry into the details of my degradation—but I can't tell a man the shame they would have put upon me—my heart turned to flint, and I left the place.

"I would have gone back to my life and perished had it not been for one woman who followed me out, and asked me to go home with her for afternoon tea. Had she said one word about my past, I had flung myself away; but because she spoke to me as if I were still in the rectory, I could not refuse. Mrs. Trevor never once mentioned my sin, and she saved my soul. I am now a nurse in one of the hospitals, and full of peace. As long as I live I shall lay white flowers on her grave, who surely was the wisest, tenderest of women."

¶

TREVOR'S fortitude was failing fast before this weight of unconscious condemnation, and he was only able to read one more—an amazing production, that had evidently cost the writer great pains.

"HONOURED SIR,—

"Bill says as it's tyking too much on the likes o' me to be addressing you on your missus' death, but it's not her husband that will despise a pore working woman oo's lost her best friend. When Bill 'ad the rumatiks, and couldn't do no work, and Byby was a-growing that thin you could see thro' 'im, Mrs. Byles says to me, 'Mrs. 'Awkes, you goes to the Society for the Horganization of Female Toilers.' Says I, 'Wot is that?' and she declares, 'It's a set of ladies oo wants to 'elp women to work, and they 'ill see you gets it.'

"So I goes, and I saw a set of ladies sitting at a table, and they looks at me; and one with spectacles, and a vice like an 'and-saw, arsks me, 'Wot's yer name?' and 'Ow old are you?' and 'Ow many children have you?' and 'Are your 'abits temperate?' And then she says, 'If you pay a shilling we 'ill put your nyme down for work has an unskilled worker.' 'I 'ain't a shilling, and Byby's dyin' for want of food.' 'This ain't a Poor 'ouse,' says she; 'this is the Booro.'

"When I wos a-going down the stairs, a lady comes after me. 'Don't cry, Mrs. 'Awkes,' for she had picked up my name. 'I've some charring for you, and we 'ill go to get something for Byby.' If ever there wos a hangel in a sealskin jacket and a plain little bonnet, but the true lady hall hover, 'er name was Mrs. Trevor. Bill, he looked up from that day, and wos on his keb in a week, and little Jim is the biggest byby in the court. Mrs. Trevor never rested till I got three hoffices to clean, to say nothing of 'elping at cleanings and parties in 'ouses.

"She wos that kind, too, and free, when she'd come hin with noos of some hoffice. 'We're horganizin' you, Missus 'Awkes, just splendid,' with the prettiest bit of smile. Bill, he used to say, 'Er 'usband's a proud man, for I never saw the like o' her for a downright lady in 'er wys'—and 'e knows, does Bill, being a kebman. When I told 'im he wos that bad that 'e never put a match to 'is pipe the 'ole night. 'Mariar,' 'e says to me, 'you an' me 'as seen somethink of her, but you bet nobody knew what a saint she wos 'xcept 'er 'usband.'" . . .

Trevor could read no more, for it had dawned at last upon him that Christ had lived with him for more than ten years, and his eyes had been holden.

The Heart's Desire

Of a ship destined for great adventure

By H. M. TOMLINSON

IF the evening was one of those which seem longer than usual, but still have far to go, it was once a custom in Millwall to find a pair of boots of which it could be claimed that it was time they were mended, and to carry the artful parcel round to Mr. Pascoe. His cobbler's shop was in a street that had the look of having retired from the hurry and press of London, aged, dispirited, and indifferent even to its defeat, and of waiting vacantly for what must come to elderly and shabby despondence. Each grey house in the street was distinguished but by its number and the ornament which showed between the muslin curtains of its parlour window. The home of the Joneses had a geranium, and so was different from one neighbour with a ship's model in gypsum, and from the other whose sign was a faded photograph askew in its frame. On warm evenings some of the women would be sitting on their doorsteps, watching with dull faces their children at play, as if experience had told them more than they wanted to know, but that they had nothing to say about it. Beyond this street there was emptiness. It ended, literally, on a blind wall. It was easy for a wayfarer to feel in that street that its life was caught. It was secluded from the main stream, and its children were a lively yet merely revolving eddy. They could not get out. When I first visited Mr. Pascoe, as there was no window ornament to distinguish his place from the others, and his number was missing I made a mistake, and went next door. Through a hole drilled in that wrong door a length of cord was pendant, with a greasy knot at its end. Underneath the knot was chalked "Pull." I pulled. The door opened on a mass of enclosed night. From the street it was hard to see what was there, so I went inside. What was there might have been a cavern—narrow, obscure, and dangerous with dim obstructions. Some of the shadows were darker than others, because the cave ended, far-off, on a portlight, a small square of day framed in black. Empty space was luminous beyond that cave. Presently, through the gloom, I saw chains and cordage hanging from the unseen roof. What was faintly the prow of a boat shaped near. Then out from the lumber and suggestions of things a gnome approached me. "Y' want ole Pascoe? Nex' dore, guv'nor!" At that moment, in the square of bright day at the end of the darkness, the apparition of a ship silently appeared, and was gone again before my surprise. That open space beyond was London River.

Next door, in a small room to which day and night were the same, Mr. Pascoe was always to be found bending over his hobbing foot under a tiny yellow fan of gaslight which could be heard making a tenuous shrilling whenever the bootmaker looked up, and ceased riveting. When his head was bent over his task only the crown of a red and matured cricketing cap, which nodded in time to his hammer, was presented to you. When he paused to speak, and glanced up, he showed a face that the gas-jet, with the aid of many secluded years, had tinctured with its own artificial hue, a face puckered through a long frowning intent on old boots. He wore an apron that had ragged gaps in it. He was a frail and dingy little man, and might never have had a mother, but could have been born of that dusty workroom, to which he had been a faithful son all his life. It was a murky interior shut in from the day, a litter of petty tools and nameless rubbish on a ruinous bench, a disorder of dilapidated boots, that mean gas-jet, a smell of leather; and there old Pascoe's hammer defiantly and rapidly attacked its circumstances, driving home at times, and all unseen, more than those rivets. If he rose to rake over his bench for material or a tool, he went spryly, aided by a stick, but at every step his body heeled over because

one leg was shorter than the other. Having found what he wanted he would wheel round, with a strange agility that was apparently a consequence of his deformity, continuing his discourse, and driving his points into the air with his hammer, and so hobble back, still talking; still talking through his funny cap, as his neighbours used to say of him. At times he convoluted aerial designs and free ideas with his hammer, spending it aloft on matters superior to boots. The boots were never noticed. Pascoe could revivify his dust. The glitter of his spectacles when he looked up might have been the sparkling of an ardent vitality suppressed in his little body.

The wall space of his room was stratified with shelves, where half-seen bottles and nondescript lumps were to be guessed at, like fossils embedded in shadow. They had never been moved, and they never would be. Hanging from a nail on one shelf was a framed lithograph of the ship *Euterpe*, off St. Catherine's Point, July 21, 1849. On the shelf below the picture was a row of books. I never saw Pascoe look at them, and they could have been like the bottles, retained by a careful man because of a notion that some day they would come in handy. Once, when waiting for Pascoe, who was out getting a little beer, I glanced at the volumes, and supposed they bore some relation to the picture of the ship; perhaps once they had been owned by that legendary brother of Pascoe's, a sailor, of whom I had had a misty apprehension. It would be difficult to say there had been a direct word about him. There were manuals on navigation, seamanship, and shipbuilding, all of them curiosities, in these later days, rather than expert guides. They were full of marginal notes, and were not so dusty as I had expected to find them. The rest of the books were of journeys in Central America and Mexico: "Three Years in Guatemala"; "The Buried Cities of Yucatan"; "Scenes on the Mosquito Coast"; "A Voyage to Honduras." There was more of it, and of that sort. They were by authors long forgotten; but those books, too, looked as though they were often in use. Certainly they could not be classed with the old glue-pots and the lumber.

It was long after my first visit to Pascoe that he referred to those books. "Somebody told me," he said one evening, while offering me a share of his beer, "that you have been to the American tropics."

I told him I could say I had been, but little more. I said it was a very big world.

"Yes," he said, after a pause: "and what a world. Think of those buried cities in Yucatan—lost in the forest, temples and gods and everything. Men and women there, once upon a time, thinking they were a fine people, the only great people, with a king and princesses and priests who made out they knew the mysteries, and what God was up to. And there were processions of girls with fruit and flowers on feast-days, and soldiers in gold armour. All gone, even their big notions. Their god hasn't got even a name now. Have you ever read the 'Companions of Columbus'?

I was as surprised as though one of his dim bottles in the shadows had suddenly glowed before my eyes, become magical with moving opalescence. What right had old Pascoe to be staring like that to the land and romance of the Toltecs? I had been under the impression that he read nothing but the Bible and "Progress and Poverty." There was a biography of Bradlaugh, too, which he would quote copiously, and his spectacles used fairly to scintillate over that, and his yellow face to acquire a new set of cunning and ironic puckers; for I believe he thought, when he quoted Bradlaugh—whose name was nearly all I knew of that famous man—that he was becoming extremely modern, and a little too strong for my conventional and sensitive mind. But here he was, telling of Incas, Aztecs, and Toltecs, of buried cities, of forgotten treasures, though mainly of the mind, of Montezuma, of the quetzal bird, and of the vanished splendour of nations that are now but a few weathered stones. It was the forlorn stones, lost in an uninhabited wilderness, to which he constantly returned. A brother of his, who had been there, perhaps had dropped a word once into Pascoe's ear while his accustomed weapon was uplifted over a dock-labourer's boot-heel, and this was what that word had done. Pascoe, with a sort of symbolic gesture, rose from his hobbing foot before me, tore the shoe from it, flung it contemptuously on the floor, and approached me with a flamboyant hammer.

And that evening I feared for a moment that Pascoe was spoiled for me. He had admitted me to a close view of some secret treasured charms of his memory; and

believing that I was not uninterested, now, of course, he would be always displaying, for the ease of his soul, supposing we had a fellowship and a bond, his fascinating quetzals and Toltecs. Yet I never heard any more about them. There was another subject, though quite homely, seeing where we both lived, and equally absorbing for us both. He knew our local history, as far as our ships and house-flags were concerned, from John Company's fleet to the *Macquarie*. He knew, by reputation, many of our contemporary master mariners. He knew, and how he had learned it was as great a wonder as though he spoke Chinese, a fair measure of naval architecture. He could discuss ships' models as some men would Greek drama. He would enter into the comparative merits of rig suitable for small cruising craft with a peculiarity which, now and then, gave me a feeling almost akin to alarm; because in a man of Pascoe's years this fond insistence of the best furniture for one's own little ship went beyond fair interest, and became the day-dreaming of romantic and rebellious youth. At that point he was beyond my depth. I had forgotten long ago, though but half Pascoe's age, what my ship was to be like, when I got her at last. Knowing she would never be seen at her moorings, I had, in a manner of speaking, posted her as a missing ship.

One day I met at his door the barge-builder into whose cavernous loft I had stumbled on my first visit to Pascoe. He said it was a fine afternoon. He invited me to inspect a figure-head he had purchased. "How's the old 'un?" he asked, jerking a thumb towards the bootmaker's. Then, with some amused winking and crafty tilting of his chin, he signed me to follow him along his loft. He led me clean through the port-light of his cave, and down a length of steps outside to his yard on the foreshore of the Thames, where, among his barges hauled up for repairs, he paused by a formless shape covered by tarpaulins.

"I've seen a few things in the way of boats, but this 'ere's a—well, what do you make of it?" He pulled the tarpaulin back, and disclosed a vessel whose hull was nearing completion. I did not ask if it was Pascoe's work. It was such an amusing and pathetic surprise, that, with the barge-builder's leering face turned to me waiting for my guess, there was no need to answer.

"He reckons," said the barge-builder, "that he can do a bit of cruising about the mouth of the Thames in that. 'Bout all she wants now is to have a mast fitted, and to keep the water out, and she'll do." He chuckled grimly. Her lines were crude, and she had been built up, you could see, as Pascoe came across timber that was anywhere near being possible. Her strakes were a patchwork of various kinds of wood, though when she was tarred their diversity would be hidden from all but the searching of the elements. It was astonishing that Pascoe had done so well. It was still more astonishing that he should think it would serve.

"I've given him a hand with it," remarked the barge-builder, "an' more advice than the old 'un 'ud take. But I dessay 'e could potter about with the dam' tub round about as far as Canvey, if 'e keeps it out of the wash of the steamers. He's been at this job two years now, and I shan't be sorry to see my yard shut of it. . . . Must humour the old boy, though. . . . Nigglin' job, mending boots, I reckon. If I mended boots, I'd 'ave to let orf steam summow. Or go on the booze."

I felt hurt that Pascoe had not taken me into his confidence, and that his ship, so far as I was concerned, did not exist. One Saturday evening, when I called, his room was in darkness. Striking a match, there was his apron shrouding his hobbing foot. This had never happened before, and I turned into the barge-builder's. The proprietor there faced me silently for a moment, treasuring a jest he was going to give me when I was sufficiently impatient for it. "Come to see whether your boots are done? Well, they ain't. Pascoe's gone. Christened his boat this morning, and pushed off. Gone for a trial trip. Gone down river."

"Good Lord," I said, or something of the sort.

"Yes," continued the barge-builder, luxuriating in it, "and I've often wondered what name he'd give her, and he done it this morning, in gold leaf. D'yer remember what she looked like? All right. Well, 'er name is the *Heart's Desire*, and her skipper will be back soon, if she don't fall apart too far off."

Her skipper was not back soon, nor that day. We had no news of him the next day. A few women were in his workshop, when I called, hunting about for

footwear that should have been repaired and returned, but was not. "'Ere they are," cried one. "'Ere's young Bill's boots, and nothing done to 'em. The silly old fool. Why didn't 'e tell me 'e was going to sea? 'Ow's young Bill to go to school on Monday now?" The others found their boots, all urgently wanted, and all as they were when Pascoe got them. A commination began of light-minded cripples who took in young and innocent boots, promising them all things, and then treacherously abandoned them, to do God knew what; and so I left.

This became serious; but old Pascoe, with his *Heart's Desire*, had vanished, like his Toltecs. A week went by. The barge-builder, for whom this had now ceased to be a joke, was vastly troubled by the complete disappearance of his neighbour, and shook his head over it. Then a few lines in an evening paper, from a port on the Devon coast, looked promising, though what they wished to convey was not quite clear, for it was a humorous paragraph. But the evidence was strong enough for me, and on behalf of the barge-builder and a few others I went at once to that west-coast harbour.

It was late at night when I arrived, and bewildering with rain, total darkness, and an upheaval of cobbles in by-ways that wandered to no known purpose. But a guide presently brought me to a providential window, and quarters in the Turk's Head. In my room I could hear a continuous murmuring, no doubt from the saloon bar below, and occasional rounds of hearty merriment. That would be the place for news, and I went down to get it. An oil-lamp veiled in tobacco smoke was hanging from a beam of a sooty ceiling. A congregation of longshoremen, visible in the blue mist and smoky light chiefly because of their pink masks, was packed on benches round the walls. They laughed aloud again as I went in. They were regarding with indulgent interest and a little shy respect an elegant figure overlooking them, and posed negligently against the bar, on the other side of which rested the large bust of a laughing barmaid. She was as amused as the men. The figure turned to me as I entered, and stopped its discourse at once. It ran a hand over its white brow and curly hair with a gesture of mock despair. "Why, here comes another to share our *Heart's Desire*. We can't keep the beauty to ourselves."

It was young Hopkins, known to every reader of the *Morning Dispatch* for his volatility and omniscience. It was certainly not his business to allow any place to keep its secrets to itself; indeed, his reputation including even a capacity for humour, the world was frequently delighted with more than the place itself knew, even in secret. Other correspondents from London were also in the room. I saw them vaguely when Hopkins indicated their positions with a few graceful flourishes of his hand. They were lost in Hopkins's assurance of occupying superiority. They were looking on. "We all got here yesterday," explained Hopkins. "It's a fine story, not without its funny touches. And it has come off jolly handy in a dull season when people want cheering up. We have found the Ancient Mariner. He was off voyaging again, but his ship's magic was washed out by heavy weather. And while beer is more plentiful than news, we hope to keep London going with some wonders of the deep."

In the morning, before the correspondents had begun on the next instalment of their serial story, I saw Pascoe sitting up in a bed at another inn, his expenses an investment of the newspaper men. He was unsubdued. He was even exalted. He did not think it strange to see me there, though it was not difficult to guess that he had his doubts about the quality of the publicity he had attracted, and of the motive for the ardent attentions of his new and strange acquaintances from London. "Don't be hard on me," he begged, "for not telling you more in London. But you're so cautious and distrustful. I was going to tell you, but was uncertain what you'd say. Now I've started and you can't stop me. I've met a man here named Hopkins, who has given me some help and advice. As soon as my craft is repaired, I'm off again. It was unlucky to meet that sou'wester in July. But once out of home waters, I ought to be able to pick up the Portuguese trade wind off Finisterre, and then I'm good for the Caribbees. I'll do it. She should take no more than a fortnight to put right."

There was no need to argue with him. The *Heart's Desire*, a centre of attraction in the place, answered any doubt I had as to Pascoe's safety. But he was humoured.

Hopkins humoured him, even openly encouraged him. The *Heart's Desire* was destined for a great adventure. The world was kept in anticipation of the second departure for this strange voyage to Guatemala. The *Heart's Desire*, on the edge of a ship-repairer's yard, was tinkered, patched, refitted, made as right as she could be. The ship-repairer, the money for the work made certain for him, did what he was told, but made no comment, except to interrogate me curiously when I was about.

A spring tide, with a southerly wind, brought us to a natural conclusion. An unexpected lift of the water washed off the *Heart's Desire*, rolled her about, and left her broken on the mud. I met the journalists in a group on their way to the afternoon train, their faces still reflecting the brightness of an excellent entertainment. Hopkins took me aside. "I've made it right with old Pascoe. He hasn't lost anything by it, you can be sure of that." But I was looking for the cobbler, and all I wished to learn was the place where I was likely to find him. They did not know that.

Late that evening I was still looking for him, and it had been raining for hours. The streets of the village were dark and deserted. Passing one of the many inns, which were the only illumination of the village, I stumbled over a shadow on the cobbles outside. In the glow of a match I found Pascoe, drunk, with his necessary stick beside him, broken

Home-made History :: By HANSARD WATT

No. IV—BOADICEA

SHE was a queen as worthy fame
As any who have graced our planet;
I dare not introduce her name,
Having no notion how to scan it:
A bunker not entirely new—
The poet Cowper shunned it too.

He also wrote an ode or song,
A gem for juvenile recital,
And, lest his scansion might be wrong,
He made the lady's name its title!
I follow his illustrious lead,
And with my poem now proceed.

Her garments and her skin were dyed
With sky-blue woad and other fluids,
Based upon fashion-plates supplied
By aged and artistic Druids,
Who, having plenty time to waste,
Found such employment to their taste.

She dwelt among the hills of Wales,
Beneath the shadow of Plinlimmon;
She never fought at bargain sales,
Or raised the cry of "Votes for Women."
No needle did she ever thread,
Or manufacture household bread.

For her no volume graced the shelf
(Our heroine both rough and rude is),
She never bought a book herself
Or got one from the local Mudie's:
Writing came not within her ken,
Her sword was mightier than her pen.

She fought the Romans: which, indeed,
Was everybody's occupation,
Druids excepted, who would plead
That fighting was beneath their station:
They watched their neighbours' warlike toil
And shared (among themselves) the spoil.

She fought the Romans, as I said,
Howbeit, it is worth repeating;
And once before her arms they fled
As beetles fly the snares of Keating;
But they returned another day
To wipe her army clean away

Much dignity she had and grace
As one who knew what queenly rank meant,
And well deserved the tardy place
Allowed her on the Thames Embankment,
Whereby we keep the memory green
Of this our only "warrior queen."

The Chap Upstairs

A little comedy of loneliness

By ROLAND PERTWEE

JOHN HARVEY was preternaturally old, but really quite young. He did not belong to the type that sits on the front seat of an omnibus. His nature was too retiring. He sat behind and did not complain when the flying sparks from the pipes and cigarettes of the gallant and debonair passengers in front took refuge in his eyes. He was too forbearing. His wardrobe spoke his character in simple phrase. It intoned the word "sobriety." Within were fifteen suits but only two suitings. His ties were numerous but in pattern identical. They had no pattern. On a shelf in his dressing-room were seventeen pairs of shoes as closely resembling one another as the members of a temperance society.

He had got into a groove.

His favourite sitting-room in the flat was lined with book-cases from floor to ceiling. He read everything, good, bad, or indifferent. To him books filled the place adventure occupies in the mind of the average man of thirty-five. Also they were his friends—his enemies—his source of enlightenment or despair. He was on excellent terms with a number of sturdy figures in literature—men, and women too—who in real life would have paralysed him into instant speechlessness. Speech was always a difficulty with John Harvey. Words are winged, and, alas! he did not possess skill as a fowler. When occasion arose and he had the will to talk, behold his sentences died still-born. But he could talk uncommonly pleasant stuff to persons who had no interest in listening. Men who laid carpets or cleaned windows—women whose mouths were full of pins while they fitted loose covers to chairs and sofas—to such as these he was eloquent. But of what avail?

Silence makes for loneliness, and he was desperately lonely although he would never admit it even to himself.

To allay the poignancy of loneliness he indulged in a secret vice, and like all other vices it grew upon him and was his master. He became a devotee of the "movies." Secretly at first, but later with growing brazenness. The "movies" became part of his life—far more readily than the theatre could have done. The lowered lights gave rise to private thoughts, and it was pleasant to him to see, in this mysterious art, the entire gamut of emotions being ranged without a single spoken word. It provided comforting reflections—it offered a welcome and a refuge to the inarticulate.

Particularly was he attached to pictures of unhappy foundlings who married into very well-furnished rooms. Their courageous ascent from melancholy and uncharitable surroundings to an approved finale in which nothing but their curls could be seen, storming against some good man's breast, was an unfailing source of delight to John Harvey. It sent him home to his lonely flat feeling right with the world. It was only the screen maiden whose eyes he dared to meet. In their company his courage was immense. He could look them squarely in the face, even when to express the immensity of their emotions the projector had need to multiply their normal proportions by eight diameters. In real life a "close up" would have filled him with terror—but at the cinema he accepted it unflinchingly, and his sympathies were aroused in direct ratio to the grief or gladness reproduced. He found the spectacle of eyes that measured three feet across and shed half-pint tears was particularly moving. But these intimacies taught him no lesson of valour the which he might apply to everyday life. In female company he remained as self-conscious and retiring as heretofore. In a crowded railway carriage he would only offer his seat to women of advanced middle age, for he did not dare to meet the grateful or reproachful glances of the fair. Here was a failure of courage, not

of chivalry, since the agony he suffered while remaining seated drove needles of remorse into his very foundations.

The flat in which he lived was comfortable and expensive, but not so stoutly built as to exclude all neighbourly sounds. Thus, when the youngest daughter of the tenant below, inspired by hopes of a musical career, embarked upon five-finger exercises, her occasional failures to strike the right note were as audible in John Harvey's study as in her mother's drawing room. If both windows chanced to be open at the same time he could hear the words passing between pupil and teacher—the slaps provoked and the shrill protests.

"Mon Dieu! 'ow must I often tell you to keep up the wrists?"

Whack!

"Woaow! You're a horrid, beastly beast! I hate you. I hate all Mam'zelles! I wish I was dead——"

Tears.

Then John Harvey would close the window because he did not like tears.

But the sounds that came from above were very different. Quiet footfalls—bath water—chair springs that squeaked luxuriously—softly closed doors—never voices.

John Harvey decided that the tenant above must be a man after his own heart. Their hours of rising and of retirement synchronized, and in all sorts of silent ways their lives seemed cut from a single pattern. He had never seen the man—never tried to see him, but he devoted an extraordinary amount of time to thinking and making up stories about him. They were attractive stories too, which invested the mysterious unknown with honour and with virtue.

Often John Harvey would suddenly cease reading, cock an ear at the ceiling and listen, with smiling content. to the faint sounds which percolated through from above. It eased his solitude to reflect that a fellow creature was occupying just such a room as his—following, perhaps, the same pursuits—killing, perhaps, the same idle, unproductive hours—sharing, perhaps, the same queer and wistful loneliness.

"I've half a mind to drop in on the fellow one of these days," mused John. "Still, I suppose I never shall."

"Half a mind" is a retrogressive state. It seldom has been known to mount a flight of steps.

John Harvey was the despair of Roberts, his man-servant. Roberts was an heirloom—part of the personal estate of John Harvey's father. He started his career as a small silk-hatted, powdered-haired youth, who rode with folded arms on the box of the Harvey barouche, and rose at last to the post of confidential valet. Unlike his son, the late Mr. Harvey was a bit of a blade—he had a roving eye—a pretty taste for neckwear in Spitalfields silk—and an astonishing capacity for remaining entirely unmoved in the presence of mixed drinks.

That John had failed to follow in his father's footsteps was matter for lasting reproach with Roberts. He did not understand such continence and could not tolerate the spectacle of youth wasted without excesses. As a man who held rather Oriental views on the subject of women, he felt he ought to protest. He had done so before, but this did not discourage a fresh attempt.

He chose an afternoon when Spring was peeping over the edge of its winter coverlet and the sparrows in the square below were celebrating the occasion with appropriate song.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but to see you sitting here day after day—growing older, sir, and nothing happening, sir—breaks my heart, sir."

John was nothing if not oblique.

"Roberts," he replied, "I've a fancy I should like a crumpet for tea."

"I'll look to it, sir, though I believe them to be out of season. But as——"

"An Easter cake would do," said John.

Roberts drew a deep breath.

"I was about to remark, sir."

John fidgeted.

"Surely this is very poor coal they are sending us."

"Very poor, sir. To claim the privilege of many years' service, it does seem a pity to me, sir, you spend so much time alone."

John raised his head and listened.

"Yes, sir?"

John shook his head.

"No—no, I thought I heard the chap who lives in the flat above—but it wasn't——"

He picked up a poker and stirred the embers in the grate.

Roberts stuck to his guns.

"I had the offer to-day of a puppy, sir. Very companionable beasts puppies—I thought, sir, you might fancy a puppy?"

" No, just a crumpet, thanks," said John. " Nothing more."

It was hopeless to argue with such a man, but the gallant Roberts made a final effort.

" Properly speaking, sir, woman is man's true companion. I am speaking again on privilege, and as a man who has been married himself on sundry occasions."

John Harvey shivered protestingly—the Mormonish characteristics of his servant had always provided him with uneasy sensations.

" I daresay all that is very modern and true," he replied, " but I find the subject disturbing."

" It does a gentleman good to be disturbed, sir."

John checked the interruption with a raised forefinger.

" The world as I see it is divided into two classes—men who live for themselves and men who share themselves with the other sex. They might be classified under the headings Bibliophiles and Polygamists. As to which is the better state I would be reluctant to decide, since for my part I know nothing about women and have never had the temerity to investigate my loss."

Roberts wound up the argument with an eighteenth-century ring.

" Well, sir, it's my opinion that a man can't, properly speaking, call himself a man till he's drunk three bottles at a sitting and had his arm round the waists of a dozen wenches."

Scenting banishment, he proceeded swiftly: " It's my motto, sir, and it was your father's before me. Cups and kisses —Live hard and die game."

" Disgusting," said John Harvey sternly. " Go away and never come back in that frame of mind again."

" Begging your pardon, sir," said Roberts, and retired fighting.

As he reached the door an electric bell sounded, followed by a timid knock.

" I am out," said John, and disappeared behind the covers of a gigantic volume of Burton's " Arabian Nights." In the circumstances it was an unhappy choice of literature. A particularly lurid paragraph catching his eye drove him hastily to restore the book to its place in the shelves.

A shaft of late afternoon sunlight pricked a pattern of spring upon the maroon walls —caught the facets of a cut-glass bowl and blew a spray of rainbows across the ceiling.

The bell rang again and presently Roberts returned. He said:

" Sir, there's—— "

" I told you I was out," replied John.

" A young lady."

" I am still out, Roberts."

" She wishes to see you, sir—seems to expect to see you."

" Expects? Roberts, I am more than ever out."

" Very good, sir, but I'm afraid she'll be disappointed."

John hesitated.

" Who is this young lady? " he asked.

Roberts said he had no idea. Thought she was from the country—had that wistful look of a country girl.

" Hm! " said John. " I don't like to send her away. Roberts, do you think I should be safe in seeing this young person? "

Roberts's smile was paternal.

" I think it would do you good, sir."

John Harvey looked up for guidance, and there were such a lot of rainbows on the ceiling.

" Show her in," said he.

He was quite unprepared for what was to follow. He had risen with the vague intention of securing a large book behind which he might retire in case of need. He never did look where he was going; not a week in the year went by but that he ran into a lamp-post—the back of a cart, or some other obstruction—it was the penalty of watching his feet rather than their direction. Roberts's announcement " Miss Mary Merrow," must have synchronized with the girl's entrance. She came in with a sort of run, and John walked straight into her.

It was a most unfortunate introduction.

Stammering awkwardly he stumbled back a few paces—bumped into a bookcase and stood aghast.

Roberts had gone out and closed the door.

In the centre of the room stood Mary Merrow, rather breathless and blinking her eyes very fast indeed.

She presented an astonishing picture. It would be difficult to describe of what.

She had a great deal of hair—wayward and curly—which was enjoying a riot beneath an absurd little Mercury cap. Her skirt was very short—she wore very large black boots and white stockings, which rucked and stood in urgent need of suspendering. Round her neck was a

ridiculous fur boa, with the ends hanging down behind. It looked more like a compress. She had a white blouse, with a blue rosette pinned to the left breast, and a pair of carefully mended white cotton gloves. In her left hand she carried, by a ring that protruded from the top, a large square parcel, done up in American cloth. The conformation of this parcel, and the ring by which it was held, suggested the accommodation of a wild beast in captivity.

The girl's expression was baffling—at the same time familiar. It contained a happy mixture of expectation and awe. She did not appear to be embarrassed by the oddness of her attire; on the contrary, she seemed quite satisfied about that.

¶

JOHN HARVEY was thunderstruck—he could not believe his senses. He touched the bookcase to reassure himself that he was in his own study and not at the cinema. For the first time in his life he realized the meaning of a "film descending on the eyes." It was the only explanation. He had seen Mary Pickford in *Daddy Longlegs—Pollyanna—Soapsuds*, and a score of other screen plays. Secretly, too, he had loved her. As we know, the spectacle of beauty arrayed in rags and her father's boots, had never failed to touch him with romance. But as a prosaic and practical young man, of sane convictions, he had never believed such characters had real existence—that lovely orphans with a passion for tamed rabbits, and with stockings that refused to keep up, had any being outside the cinema. The discovery of his mistake was staggering.

She stood in the middle of the room, blinking and breathing very fast.

Something would have to be done. John took a grip on himself and spoke.

"I—er—Miss Merrow—that is to say—how do you do?"

"Thank you very much," said Mary, as artless as you please.

"Oh!" said John. "I see. Um! Please forgive me—I—er—wasn't for the moment expecting—that is—er—you wish to see me?"

"Yes, please." She nodded.

Her simplicity gave him a measure of self-confidence.

"Well, here I am—at least, I think so." The sentence ended there. He started a fresh one. "Do you sit down—I mean will—won't you sit down?"

Again Mary said: "Thank you very much."

Dash it! The girl talked like a subtitle.

He put a chair for her and took another himself, announcing, as he sat down:

"My name is John Harvey."

"Yes, isn't it," said she.

Assuming she had regarded his name as an observation on the weather, he politely subscribed:

"Very for the time of year."

"I know," said Mary.

She had pulled off her gloves and was rolling them into a ball. Her hands were surprisingly smooth and white. John marvelled at that.

She it was who made the next remark.

"Have you seen lots?"

"Seen lots," he repeated dully.

"Wives," she answered.

He presumed it was one of those modern jokes or catches. He knew the one about "Isobel necessary on a bicycle," but "Lot's wife" was new to him.

"No," he said, "she was turned into a pillar of salt before I was born."

His humour was wasted, however, for Mary was occupied staring at the decorations of the room. She did not seem to hear. She had a pleased smile about her lips. John assumed a businesslike air.

"You wished to see about—er——"

"About the situation, please."

He screwed up his forehead.

"Whose situation?"

"Yours."

"But I haven't one," he replied.

"The one you offered," she explained.

"I didn't, did I?"

"Advertised for."

"My dear young lady, I've never written an advertisement in my life."

"But you have," said Mary. "I brought it with me."

She started rummaging in the pocket of her skirt.

"I saw it on a piece of paper that Mrs. Carter—she's the old lady who keeps the all-sorts shop at Ponder's End—it's a Post Office, too, and you can buy string there and buttons, and there are bottled sweets in the window—greengage Bounders—Bulls eyes—Clove Balls and Pevensey Humbugs—Ponder's End is in the country—it's where I live and very pretty——"

John Harvey was beginning to feel dizzy.

"I may be unusually dense," he said,

" but were all these details printed on this piece of paper to which you refer."

" Oh no," said Mary, shaking her curly head so hard that the little Mercury cap fell off and lay, unnoticed, on the floor, " it was a piece of newspaper and was wrapped round some Demerara sugar I bought, because the blue bag had a hole in the corner and was leaking. It's in my pocket somewhere. I cut out the advertisement with my scissors—at least, they aren't really my scissors—but then no scissors are anybody's really own scissors—are scissors?"

A man's nerves need to be in good order if they are to remain under control after such an utterance. John Harvey stumbled to his feet and made pretence of looking for his glasses, mumbling, as he did so :

" Perhaps you would be good enough to convey to me the substance of this mysterious advertisement," and as though it were the simplest thing in the world, she answered :

" You advertised for a wife, and I thought perhaps I would do."

John Harvey knocked over a vase of tulips. The spilled water trickled into his shoe and calmed him.

Mary had come to her feet to make her announcement and was picking out the creases in her blouse, smoothing her skirt, and generally presenting herself to the best advantage. The ingenuousness of her actions was inconceivable.

" Good heavens," gasped John, " show me this advertisement at once."

A mere glance at the cutting was enough. He turned to Mary with a gasp of relief.

" This is a mistake," he exclaimed, " you've made a serious mistake. The advertiser's address is number 9, Melbourne Court—mine is number 7. You can see for yourself I don't want a wife. Certainly not a newspaper wife."

But Mary did not move. The glad expectancy died out of her face—her mouth went down at the corners.

" Will you please tell me what I ought to do," she pleaded.

He shook his head.

" I really don't know. I—I have very little experience in these matters."

" Should I go up to the flat above and ask there ? "

Strange that the bare thought of such a thing should have put him out of temper.

" Certainly not," he replied, " unless you know the man who lives there."

" But I don't. Do you ? "

" Not personally. I've heard him moving about, but I've never seen him."

" But he wants a wife," said Mary, " and as I've come all this way——"

John Harvey put out a restraining hand.

" My dear young lady, I forbid you to go about from door to door being a wife at every one of them. It—it isn't decent."

He was surprised at his own valour—so, apparently, was Mary. She raised her eyes with a look of submissive admiration.

" What must I do then ? "

He pointed at the chair and bade her sit down again. She was oddly willing to obey. As she marched towards it the absurd feather boa fell off and revealed the gentle lines of her throat and shoulders. The absence of the boa and the Mercury hat made a remarkable difference to her appearance. She was beginning to look less like a picture and more human. But for the shortness of her skirt—the domino effect of boots and stockings—and a ridiculous piece of ribbon that imprisoned her hair in a knot at the top of her head, she might have passed muster in any company. It was as though a latent homogeneous sense was superimposing upon the characteristics of Los Angeles the simpler seeming of South Kensington. Already she had ceased to appear out of place in John Harvey's flat, a fact which he recognized with uneasiness.

He cleared his throat.

" Sit down," he said, "and let us consider what is best to be done."

" Yes, but it isn't fair to take up your time," Mary persisted. " You don't want a wife."

He hastened to assure her that this was so.

" No, you don't," she repeated pathetically. " Do you ? "

" I have already told you I do not."

" But *he* does," said Mary, with a nod at the ceiling.

" Then he must go without," said John Harvey. " A man who has the effrontery to insert such an advertisement, has no right to expect applicants. It's a shameful proceeding."

" But if he was lonely," Mary suggested.

" That has nothing to do with it," he answered with heat. " I am very disappointed in the man who lives upstairs—and I had formed such an agreeable opinion of the fellow, too."

" Had you—why ? "

He turned to answer. The knot of ribbon

had disappeared from the top of her head. Her hair, with its crooked side parting, had fallen serenely over her ears. The change was magical and so surprised John that he lost track of what he was about to say.

"Won't you have some tea," he said. "You're sure to be tired after travelling—it makes people tired. Do have some tea. There's a crumpet—I know there's a crumpet. We could share the crumpet if you care for crumpets."

Mary looked so pleased.

"I like crumpets," she nodded. "They ring bells for crumpets the same as for weddings."

All conversational roads between the sexes lead to, or away from, the altar. To cover his embarrassment, John Harvey rang a bell—for tea. Roberts's satisfaction on receiving the order was too obvious to be tolerated. He inquired whether he should secure the services of a second crumpet.

"Do," said John, severely. And then, with an effort to relax, he remarked: "Are you aware, Roberts, that they ring bells for crumpets the same as for muffins?"

"Weddings," said Mary, correctively, and Roberts retired with a smile.

A silence followed Roberts's departure, broken at last by Mary.

"If I'm to stop may I please change my shoes? I brought another pair in case there was a party."

¶

JOHN murmured an inaudible assent and went and looked out of the window. Night was falling and the window glass had the impertinence to reflect the room and its occupants. He could not avoid seeing what happened. Mary opened the parcel she had brought, and it was a bird cage with a pair of slippers inside it. She sat on the floor with her back toward him, and presently he saw her take out the slippers and put the deplorable boots and the pair of white stockings into the bird cage. This done, she again wrapped it in the piece of American cloth—stood up and shook out the folds of her skirt. By some astonishing process it seemed to have increased its length by four inches.

The reflection in the glass revealed a perfectly normal and very attractive young lady—simply clad in a white blouse, a black skirt, black silk stockings and black satin shoes. The rosette had disappeared.

"I've finished," she announced, and turned for his inspection. "It was kind of you to ask me to tea."

He was too confused to talk sense.

"Tea is not a kindness," he stammered. "I gravely doubt if it is even a courtesy."

Mary shook her head at him.

"Do you always talk round the corner in that funny way?" she demanded.

"Really, I don't know. I have never been round the corner to see."

"And do you live here all alone?"

He admitted to the charge of solitude, but added that he had his books for company.

"No friends?" she queried.

"Very few."

"I haven't any friends, either. I'm very lonely, too."

At which he hastened to reply.

"I never said a word about being lonely."

"But it is lonely to live all by oneself with nothing but books."

He refused to be drawn, and she proceeded.

"Still, I suppose in a great big place like London one can't really be lonely—and in a great big place like these flats, one can't be lonely either. There must be something very sociable about living in flats."

"You're entirely wrong. There is probably no more lonely existence in the world than living in a flat."

And in answer to the surprise she revealed:

"You wouldn't understand that, because you come from the country where everyone knows everyone else and everyone is part of everyone else. But here in London one is only part of oneself—often quite a small part, too."

Tea appeared, which was tiresome—until Roberts disappeared.

"Would you like me to pour out?" asked Mary.

"If you would," said John. "Thanks."

Strange how pleasant it was to watch a woman performing this simple feat. He was quite captivated and followed the movements of her wrist and fingers with a curious sense of basking. The experience was so novel. As she passed his cup their eyes met.

"Do go on talking," she asked.

"Ah, we were discussing loneliness, were we not?"

"Yes."

"You wouldn't understand how it feels to live with people to right and left—people above you and below—about whom you know nothing. You meet them, perhaps, in a lift—on the stairs—hear their voices in

laughter, or raised in argument, and yet they're strangers. It's queer, isn't it?"

She nodded sympathetically.

"And you don't even know the chap—the man who lives upstairs?"

"No, he's a mystery to me."

"Ah well," said Mary, practically, "I don't expect you want to know him."

John Harvey put down his cup with an air of decision.

"It's curious you should say that—you're wrong. I do. I want to know him very much. Until—until to-day his life has interested me extraordinarily."

He seemed reluctant to proceed, but the kindliness in Mary's eyes persuaded him.

"In some curious way I feel there is a bond of union between us. Every morning he gets up at the same time as I do, and he has his bath at the same time as I have mine. I actually enjoy hearing the water splash when he turns on his tap—enjoy it. It gives me a solid sense of companionship."

He caught a smile flickering at the corners of her mouth and stopped abruptly.

"You are laughing at me. I can hardly blame you."

"But I wasn't—I wasn't, really," said Mary. "Do go on."

So he went on, and he told of the delight he had to hear the waste water go plonking down the pipe outside his bathroom window.

"It gurgles so merrily as I rub myself down with a towel. In a way I think it hyphenates his mysterious existence with mine."

Mary nodded appreciatively.

"Yes, and then?" she said.

"And then he walks back to his bedroom. I imagine there's linoleum in the hall."

"Why?"

"Because you can hear his footfalls so distinctly. Light footfalls they are, and absurdly enough I try to keep step. Left, right—left, right—but I never succeed, I never can step short enough. Then, click! The bedroom door shuts and a heavy pile carpet muffles all the rest. We shut our bedroom doors at the same instant every morning—only he shuts his gently and I bang mine."

"Why?" she asked again.

"Because I think if I bang mine he'll bang his, and so we shall contrive some kind of early morning greeting. Bang—bang. 'Top of the morning to you, sir, whoever you may be.' Did you ever hear a stupider idea than that?"

"I think it's rather pathetic—very pathetic." And, although there was obviously no reason for them, a hint of tears glistened in her eyes.

"Pathetic," repeated John. "I fail to see where the pathos comes in."

"So far as I can see," she returned, "it never goes out. Oh, it's very pathetic that anyone could have so little interest in life that they listen to a few poor footsteps overhead—some soapy water splashing down a pipe, and try to get someone they don't know to bang a door. It's *very* pathetic."

"I wonder," said John. "Perhaps it is."

For the first time he looked at her without conscious uneasiness.

"Do you know, it has been extraordinarily pleasant to me to have met you in this unconventional way. I—er—I've never spoken to a woman with any comfort before."

"Haven't you," said Mary.

He shook his head.

"Oh, well," she said, jumping to her feet, "I think I'd better be going."

He stretched out a hand to delay her.

"But not upstairs," he pleaded.

She hesitated—half-hurt—half-doubtful.

"Well—if—if you say I mustn't."

"Ah, that's good-natured of you," he warmly applauded. "I'm sure these rash marriages are a great mistake. Would you, I wonder, let me drive you as far as the station in my car. It would be a real pleasure."

"I suppose it would," she acknowledged ruefully. Then a sudden twinkle showed in her eyes. She beckoned him to approach.

"I say, do you think, from what you've heard of him—the chap upstairs could have been pleased with me?"

She raised her chin—their faces were only a few inches apart. It was John Harvey's first experience of a "close up," and it shook him to the bone.

"I think it's exceedingly probable," he replied, huskily.

Mary Merrow backed a pace with a ripple of pleased laughter. The sound of it—the sex of it—awoke something elemental in John Harvey's nature that had never proved its being before. A sudden fury possessed him, and he stamped across the room to the door, dragging his cuffs free of his wrists.

"And I think I'll go upstairs," he cried, "and tell that fellow precisely what I think of a man who acts as he has acted."

"Oh! please don't," she implored.

"I feel it a public duty. A man has no right to take short cuts to holy matrimony."

He was working himself up nobly.

" Yes, but I was just as bad."

" Nothing of the kind—with you it's entirely different."

" Oh, is it," said Mary, with the strangest smile. " Is it ? Oh ! "

The last " Oh " sounded peculiarly satisfied.

He turned—came back—and took her hand in his.

" Are you really so keen on this marrying business ? "

" I think everybody ought to be married," she said. " I think it's rather silly not to be married when you can be, and it's certainly very sad not to be when you can't be."

He sighed, and her hand dropped from his.

" I suppose women look at things in a different way."

" Sometimes they have to," she answered, with her smile again. " You see, I haven't any bath water running down a pipe outside my window."

The words were spoken innocently enough, but they had the strangest effect on John Harvey. He swivelled round and looked at her—his hands came up from his sides and floated about in the air as though they were trying to find something—he seemed to be drawn towards her. It was only by a miracle he saved himself—and—dived for the door.

" Roberts," he cried, " I want a taxi."

But Mary did not move. Her brows had come down in something resembling a frown.

" Not for me," she said ; " I'm going upstairs."

John Harvey turned and faced her, with clenched hands. Then, with unexpected rapidity, he whipped off his coat.

" Whatever are you doing ? " the girl demanded.

" About this time," he answered, " the chap who lives upstairs generally comes in and sits on a chair that has a squeaky spring. I—too—am going upstairs."

The meaning was unmistakable.

" I shouldn't," said Mary. " He's sure to be late to-night."

" Why do you say that ? "

" Because "—she hesitated—approached and put a hand on his arm—" because, you poor lonely and very old young man, I am the chap who lives upstairs."

" What nonsense, you——"

" I am the chap who lives upstairs, and I hear your bath water splashing into the bath, and I hear your slippers flapping down the passage, and I hear your door bang out its greeting. And all these things have become part of my life in some awfully silly way that only people who live the awfully silly lives you and I seem to live would understand."

He had sunk into a chair and was staring at her blankly.

" But the advertisement in the paper ? "

" I put in that advertisement." She sounded very ashamed of herself.

" Those extraordinary clothes."

" I've often sat beside you at the cinema and seen how your eyes lighted up when the orphans came in."

He nodded, and she went on :

" At first I was only mildly interested in you, then I got more interested, and at last dreadfully interested ; and when a woman gets dreadfully interested it can't stop there. I didn't know how I could get into this flat, and see it—and you, so I thought of this very elaborate and rather deceitful and a little bit disreputable plan."

She was staring at the carpet when the confession came to an end.

He rose and took a turn up and down the room. He stopped before her.

" Well," said he, " and now you've seen the flat and its owner, are you sorry you came down from upstairs ? "

" No—I'm glad," she answered.

" And are you an orphan ? "

" Yes, please. But I had to buy those dreadful boots—mine were too smart. I'm afraid I'm rather a rich orphan."

But he would not allow that.

" As yet we're both poor orphans," said he. " Our fortunes await us."

With a sudden inspiration he raised his head to look at the ceiling.

" You're listening," said Mary.

" No."

" Surely you believe I am the chap who lives upstairs ? "

" I believe it."

" But you're still listening."

" No, I'm wondering," he replied. " I'm wondering if two flats could be converted into one. I'm wondering if a landlord would approve the idea of a spiral staircase that——" He turned and looked at her fearlessly—possessively. " Shall we sit down and talk this thing out ? "

" Yes, if you please, Daddy-long-legs."

When Roberts came in to clear away the tea things a few minutes later they were sitting side by side on the sofa and he was calling her " Polyanna."

Failure Farm

Drama and pathos in life's backwater.

By COSMO HAMILTON

A SCREW of paper hit the book that Holt was reading, and as it fell he caught it with his knee. He saw that it was a note addressed to him in pencil, and he opened it, puzzled and surprised.

It was short and to the point. The initials G. F. were scrawled at the end of it. "Follow me out in ten minutes," it ran. "I shall be under the wall of the cowshed facing east. There's something queer going on."

Holt looked up and some of the astonishment that he felt was stamped upon his face. G. F. was obviously George Fraser, who, getting up quietly, was knocking out his pipe against a log. He caught the inquiring look and nodded, his teeth gleaming whitely for an instant against his deep tan. He brushed some tobacco ash off the rough clothes that he was wearing, made his way across the uneven floor of old flagstones, opened the door, and went out. A whiff of hay-scented air came in. The heavy latch fell with a click.

Holt was not the only one who watched him go. The daughter of the house, whose golden head and graceful young shoulders had been bent over her sewing since the evening meal, looked up, too, and the novelist caught the same expression of wistfulness in her large blue eyes that he had often noticed before. It was natural enough for her to feel something more than friendship, he thought with a spasm of jealousy, for the only young man among that queer collection of flotsam and jetsam that had come together to work for her father on his ramshackle farm.

Because the manner in which he had received the note had in it a silent request for secrecy, he glanced quickly round the room to make sure that no one had seen him read it. The scene was one to which he had become perfectly familiar since he had taken a room in that farmhouse a week before, and it still stirred his curiosity and interest. John Alton, the owner of the place, a thin, angular, dyspeptic man, with a tangle of grey hair that hadn't been cut for months, was playing chess as usual. A pair of pince-nez was fixed on the end of a large and bony nose, beneath which the mouth was sour and cynical. High, prominent cheek-bones, burned red by the sun, a good chin, and an abnormally big Adam's apple helped to give him more the appearance of a schoolmaster than of a man who struggled from sunrise to sunset to scrape a living out of his second-rate acres.

His engrossed opponent, whose name was Phillpots, was a small, foxy man with beetling red eyebrows, a sharp face pitted with freckles, and tufts of red hair sprouting out of large, pointed ears. His high-pitched voice, generally giving vent to complaint, was refined in the manner and intonation of a clergyman. It was difficult to imagine why he should be working as a farm labourer.

On the other side of the long table, with his back to the bulbous oil-lamp, reading a much-thumbed edition of Shakespeare's "Sonnets," sat another figure not usually associated with such surroundings. Passmore he called himself, a round-faced, soft-looking person, with long, artistic hands, mousy hair parted accurately in the centre, and gouty, short-sighted eyes surrounded by myriads of criss-crossed lines. His blue flannel shirt was clean, and he had, as usual, changed his working trousers for a pair of grey ones which, although rubbed and shabby, had been made, it was easy to see, by a good tailor.

The remaining member of the personnel of Alton's farm, a sparrow-like man with a strong cockney accent, a shrill pea-hen laugh, and an irritating habit of sniffing after saying something that he considered to be smart, had gone to bed early, as was his wont. He answered to the name of Jones, and ought to have been a barber.

The room itself reeked with history, and had in its time harboured the soldiers

of the Civil War, both Royalist and Cromwellian. That was why Holt had persuaded Alton, much against his will, to put him up for a week. He wanted its atmosphere for a story that he was writing, and he was taking notes. It was one of those enormous kitchens, with huge oak beams and whitewashed walls, only to be found in the farmhouses of its period. A dresser, crammed with rough, thick crockery, ran all along one side of the wall. The other was broken by a half-dozen high, narrow windows with leaded panes which were rarely opened. The fireplace at the end of the room, surmounted by a semi-circular beam to which hundreds of old, rusty horseshoes had been nailed, was wide and deep, with bricks discoloured by centuries of log fires. Wood ash, banked up at the back of it, rose to a little mountain.

As to furniture, the long table in the centre was worm-eaten oak, with a great crack down its shiny top, its footrails worn into a series of hollows. Ladderback chairs, equally ancient, were ranged against the walls, and grandfathers of the same breed, with stiff, rubbed arms and cane seats much broken, were everywhere. Festoons of onions hung from beam to beam, and there was a row of hams across one of the corners. Several pairs of dilapidated top-boots stood beneath the dresser, and two double-barrel guns rested on pegs driven into the wall near the door. A wheezy, half-blind sheep-dog lay asleep in front of the fire, its bearded face resting on its earth-stained paws.

Letting ten minutes go by with growing impatience, Holt was a little amused to find that the last sentence of Fraser's note had caught hold of his imagination. The mysterious reference to "something queer" set his mind at work like a newly-wound clock. The only queer things that could be connected with the hard-working monotony of this farmhouse, it seemed to him, were the men who returned from the fields to feed every night in the kitchen and afterwards tried to amuse themselves there for a couple of hours before going wearily to bed.

From his first evening in the house these people had naturally set Holt speculating. He had wondered how it came about that these heterogeneous creatures, who had lost their places in the great procession through weakness or bad luck, had drifted into the same cul-de-sac. Alton himself was an enigma and, although not so bad a failure as his labourers, had plainly come down in the world. That had been easy to gather from the bitterness that ran underneath his remarks and his enmity towards what he called "the Earth—my mother-in-law." He was a hard and sour task-master, with nothing either magnetic or kindly about him, but the fact that he gave out a subtle sense of having been broken might probably have drawn those human wrecks. Birds of a feather flock together, and wounded hounds invariably crawl apart and lick each other's hurts. Holt had honestly to confess that his efforts to ingratiate himself with those men were coldly and firmly repelled. He was *not* a failure, and they did not disguise the fact that they resented it and his presence.

Finally he got up. It had been the longest ten minutes that he had ever endured. Things had a strange knack of disappearing, so he put his book in his pocket. Then, in order to appear casual and without a settled purpose, he wandered about the room, watched the game of chess for a moment, and presently drifted to the door. "Wonderful night," he said to the room generally, and went out, taking with him a little smile from Mary. It was not the sort of smile, he realized, that George Fraser would have won.

It was, indeed, a wonderful night. The moon was in its prime. The sky cloudless and transparent. Every single star that ever had been lighted gleamed in all the windows of heaven. The scent of the new-mown hay that was drying in the fields lay on the quiet air. Young owls called to each other like children, and a brook, deep down in the dip, gave out a constant chatter.

Fraser was leaning against the barn with his hands in his pockets. His physical strength was emphasized by his workman's flannel shirt and the corduroy trousers that were held tight beneath his knees by pieces of string; but these clothes did nothing to disguise his obvious breeding and easy gracefulness. What on earth was he doing on Failure Farm?

Without a word he caught hold of the novelist's arm and led him to the other side of the building. He pulled up under the shadow of the wall and pointed to a small window in a loft room over the stables on the opposite side of the yard. A long ladder from the apple orchard rested against the window sill.

"Watch," he said, with a peculiar note of excitement in his voice.

Holt did so. On the blind, which had been pulled down, the shadow of an active figure, passing and repassing in front of the lamp, was thrown as in a peep-show.

"There. See that?" The hand tightened.

"Yes. Who is it?"

"Jones."

Holt was puzzled. "But why shouldn't it be Jones? Isn't that his room, and doesn't he go to bed directly after dinner every night?" There didn't seem to be anything exciting about that.

"That's the point," said Fraser. "He pretends to go to bed early every night. But he doesn't. He sneaks out of the kitchen, yawns his head off, pretends hardly to be able to keep his beady little eyes open, goes to his room, changes into a perfectly respectable suit of clothes, and then, looking like the prosperous mayor of a small provincial town, turns out his light, nicks down that ladder, and goes off jauntily to the village. Often it is after midnight before he slips back."

"You've watched him, then?"

"Every night this week."

"Why? What made you suspect that he was up to something?" Here was mystery—here, of all places. Perhaps even drama. Inconceivable, among a body of men who had drifted into this stagnant backwater from the great main stream of life. The pulse of the writing man quickened.

"I suspected him the moment he shuffled in and asked for a job," said Fraser. "From the very first he seemed to me not to be a genuine failure like all the rest of us, but a sham, a fake, made up for the part, like an actor. That creature couldn't have it in him ever to have achieved such a thing as failure! Not he!"

Holt almost laughed at this professional pride in the glorious act of failing. The irony of the thing was tremendous.

But not to Fraser. He saw no irony or humour in all this. He opened the door of the barn and went inside. "Cursed little cockney rat," he said, with blazing anger. "He's here on false pretences. He lied to get in, and is taking advantage of our sense of brotherhood to get a cheap holiday. He's probably a booking clerk in a railway station or a counter jumper in a draper's shop."

"Do the others feel as you do about him?"

"Yes. They're all uneasy. He has utterly disturbed the peace of this place And to-day when we were eating our bread and cheese during the lunch hour, and Jones had gone to dip his head in the stream, we discussed him. The old man's eyes blazed, and he said that if Jones turned out to be a fraud he'd snap every bone in his body."

"He could, too." Holt remembered the capable way in which he had seen Alton tackle a party of trespassers.

"He'll climb down that ladder in a few minutes, and when you see his smug and comfortable appearance it'll be as plain to you as it is to me that he has no more right to be here than you have, that he's no more down and out than you are." He clenched his fist and drew in his breath.

"What are you going to do?" asked Holt, catching something of this man's righteous anger.

"Give myself the pleasure of shaking the teeth out of his head," said Fraser, grimly. "I'll teach him to pose at Failure Farm as one of us. From the way he's fussing about he's only just begun to dress himself up. Will you wait and see?"

"Yes." They stood together in the darkness of the barn. The earthy smell of potatoes rose up to them. A bat flew out within an inch of Holt's head and turned his blood cold. He was certainly about to obtain something more than atmosphere out of his stay in that house.

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IT was the first time that he had had an opportunity to talk intimately with one of Alton's derelicts. He was eager and even excited at the chance—especially as he liked Fraser, and felt drawn to him by some subtle sympathy. Hitherto, like the others, first he had shunned his approach. The first flicker of interest and friendship had come into his eyes the previous night when Holt had been speaking of a pet ambition to be married and build a house in the country. He had failed to find the right girl, and the familiar word failure had broken down the barrier. Holt was very glad.

Keeping close watch on the window in the loft they talked in undertones.

"You're so young," said Holt, going boldly into personalities. "I don't see why you should class yourself with old Alton and those pathetic men."

A streak of moonlight outlined the clean-

cut, well-bred profile of the man at his side. Not more than thirty-three or -four, and apparently in full possession of physical and mental health, it was not easy to conceive of his having fallen permanently out of the procession of life. "You don't? Why not? I came here through Hell, by way of Eton, Cambridge, and the London theatre."

And then a silence fell. This summing up of a short career was terse without a doubt, but it left the man who dealt in stories with an eager desire to know its ins and outs. For several minutes they stood shoulder to shoulder in that potato-reeking barn watching the light that flickered in the window on the other side of the moon-bathed yard. Holt thought of the sham failure up in that loft with growing disgust and repulsion. How dared he trespass into the inner ring of a company of such colossal derelicts? To him, with his mind centred on the present for the future, it was almost uncanny to find himself among men to whom nothing but the past held any interest, but he respected them and their paradoxical pride. He knew, too, that it only required the twisting of a finger to turn success to failure. Before he could venture on another question Fraser spoke again.

"Are you much of a playgoer?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember a play produced at the Royalty five years ago called *Women and Ladies?*"

"Of course I do. It ran for a year."

"And did you ever see *St. Martin's Summer* at the Haymarket, put on a few weeks later?"

"Several times. A delightful thing, fresh, amusing, and full of charm."

"Maybe you also saw *Tea and Tittle-Tattle* and *Baby-Face?*"

"Indeed I did. They were all written by a young dramatist who brought fresh blood to a tired theatre, and of whom tremendous things were expected. Let me see. His name was——"

"Fraser. G. Guthrie Fraser."

Holt wheeled round. "Good heavens! Are *you*——"

"Yes. I was the young dramatist of whom tremendous things were expected." He gave a peculiar laugh. "In the writing of those pot-boilers, those easy efforts that aimed no higher than the box office, I succeeded brilliantly. The managers ran at my heels like a pack of hungry dogs, and my bank account bulged with money. But when it came to my serious plays, the real stuff that was in me, the big, honest, true work in the writing of which my whole soul was thrown, I failed."

"But how?" It was unbelievable.

"When it seemed that I had fame at my feet I submitted my six big efforts, one by one, to the manager who had made his fortune out of my pot-boilers. He read them all, eager to begin his autumn season with something from my pen. I waited calmly for his decision, firm in the belief that any one of them would place my name among those of Brieux, Hauptmann, Ibsen, and Tolstoy. . . . When he came to see me, with a big bundle under his arm, he looked like a man who had just undergone a frightful operation. He was weak and white. His face was drawn and haggard, and the first thing he said was to beg me to consult a doctor. He thought that I was suffering from incipient lunacy." He laughed again, mirthlessly.

"What did you do?"

"I refused to burn them in a heap as he strongly advised, and go back to work on another frivolous effort, and sent them round to every manager in London, responsible and irresponsible. All their answers ran something like this: 'My dear Mr. Fraser, I have read your new plays. Oh, my dear Mr. Fraser. . . .' So I took a theatre with my own money and produced the one I liked the best with the finest cast available. The critics jeered, the public stayed away, the actors gave in their notices. But I engaged other actors less famous, produced the other five in quick succession—the average run of each was a month to empty benches—and lost every cent that I had ever made."

"My dear chap," said Holt, a little feebly.

Fraser gave the man at his elbow the sort of smile which made it clear that he understood the self-consciousness of sympathy. "I refused all temptations to dash off another pot-boiler, and slunk out of London with my tail between my legs. I was the laughing stock of the critics, 'the man who thought that he knew better than the public.' I held horses' heads, played the piano in a moving-picture theatre, delivered milk at area doors, drove a tramcar in a suburban town, and finally tramped into the country. Alton found me sleeping in one of these outhouses. My one hope was never to wake again. Having a fellow-

feeling for has-beens he took me on to make his hay, and I've been here ever since—I am the greatest failure in the history of playwrights." He tilted his chin as he said this.

Taking on the colour of surroundings and sympathies in the way of the born writer, the feeling came over Holt as he watched the window with this story in his ears that if he had failed and gone under like Fraser and his pathetic companions he, too, would have resented the presence of the undersized impertinent bounder who had managed to ooze his way into the privacy of that harbour under false pretences. And, as in that mood he thought the whole thing over, a sudden dramatic idea flashed through his brain.

"I don't think anything will be achieved by assaulting Jones," he said. "There's nothing queerer about him than there is about any cheat. The thing to do is to put him to the test; sit in judgment on him. When he comes down the ladder seize him, march him into the kitchen, and make him tell his story to the experts there. If you and they don't consider then that his failure is big enough to justify his remaining, fling him off the farm. Don't you think that's the fairest and quickest thing to do?"

Fraser thought it over and nodded. "It's a good idea," he said. "Have you ever written plays? One way or another it will bring our uneasiness to an end. And now's the moment. Look."

The lamp was blown out. The blind went up with a flick. With an air of extreme caution, Jones crawled through the window and began his descent of the ladder. With his long arms and short legs he looked rather ludicrously like a monkey.

Acting on a mutual impulse Fraser and Holt left the barn, darted across the moonlit yard, and stood waiting, ready to pounce.

When Jones landed and saw the two men, he hid his surprise, after one quick look, behind an affectation of bland bonhomie. It was very well done. "Ullo-ullo," he said, buttoning his coat to hide a gleaming watch-chain. "Out to enjoy the nightly odours and listen to the wondrous tale of stars?"

The man had read the poets, at any rate.

"No," replied Fraser, towering above him with the quiet menace of a policeman. "Knowing your after-dinner habits, we're waiting to take you to the kitchen to tell your wondrous tale to Alton, Phillpots, and Passmore."

He caught the antagonism and bristled. "What's the idea?" he asked, shrilly.

"Briefly this," said Fraser: "We're not satisfied with your right to the membership of Failure Farm—any of us. We've tolerated you here for two weeks, and the time has now come for you either to prove your qualifications or get out."

Jones looked suddenly at Holt with a most disconcerting smile of irresistible amusement, and lowered one eyelid in a wink. But Holt scowled back at him and gave no encouragement to his attempt to win him to his side. And so he turned again to Fraser. "All right," he said. "Take me before the judge and jury. I'll jolly soon show you who's the biggest failure in this place—jolly soon. It's only modesty that's kept me from advertisin' up to now; that, and a sportin' wish not to make any of you jealous. That's all. S'elp me bob. But let's get it over quick. I'm all washed up to prowl round the village and pick up a bit of fluff." He went forward into the moonlight, tilted his hat, puffed out his chest, and screwed his face into the sort of knowing grin that never fails to get a laugh from a vaudeville audience.

Weird little person. There were dozens like him on the stage, of various degrees of cleverness.

Fraser led the way without another word. Jones went next, imitating his walk, and Holt followed, with all the novelist's relish of a human scene.

¶

THE derelicts were still in the kitchen. But Alton was putting the chessboard into a drawer in the dresser, and Mary, the young Madonna, was tidying up her workbasket. Holt saw her look at Fraser as he stalked in, and caught something in her eyes that was like a spark from a heart of fire. His search for a wife was not to come to an end in Alton's farm.

The sudden and rather dramatic entrance at a moment when everybody was very ready for bed after the strenuous work of the day, filled the professor and Phillpots with curiosity, and made Alton wheel round from the dresser. It seemed to occur to them all that Fraser and Holt were marching Jones into the kitchen as a prisoner, especially as he stood between them, unusually clean and spruce, with the air of one who had been captured.

"What's all this?" demanded Alton.

Fraser came at once to the point. " We've brought Jones before you," he said, " to put an end to our doubts. And if what he has to say doesn't satisfy you that he has a right to remain here, it is for you to decide what shall happen to him. I will do the rest."

" An apologia pro vita sua," said Passmore, rising to his feet and standing like an ancient and indignant turkey.

Phillpots sprang up, electrically. " About time, too," he said, glaring at Jones.

Alton waved his hand towards the fireplace. " Stand there, Jones, and we will hear you. But what you say must be under oath. Hitherto you have not convinced us as a man to be believed."

With a new and curious touch of dignity Jones crossed the flag-stoned floor and stood with his back to the old fireplace, framed by the square of heavily-carved oak. To the astonishment of everyone who watched his comedian face it went as white as his collar, and his lips, nearly always twisted into a grin, now trembled with emotion. " What I have to say," he said, unevenly, " is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God."

He looked slowly from one pair of suspicious eyes to another and then, with a dignified gesture, appealed for permission to speak.

The four colossal and undoubted failures drew their chairs into a semicircle. Mary remained at her place at the little table, and Holt, being at this extraordinary trial on sufferance, seated himself near the door. Even in that blind alley, to which a handful of creatures, bankrupt of hope and ambition, had crept away from life to eke out the remainder of their disillusions there was, then, no escape from Fate. As many of the ingredients of the divine comedy were in that isolated farmhouse as there are in the everyday story of a crowded city—jealousy, brutality, self-preservation in all its selfishness, and, in the heart of that young girl, love.

" My father," he said, beginning quietly and without a trace of cockney accent, " was a butter and egg merchant, with sausages and Australian wines as a side line, in a good way of business. He also purveyed tea and lived in Camberwell. I was the only child and never knew my mother. It was my father's one obsession to make a gentleman of me, and to see me relieving the pains of humanity as a doctor in the medical quarter of London. I was well and properly educated to this end, walked Bartholomew's Hospital as a student, eventually won my degree, and set up practice in a swagger house. But all the time I had been studying medicine my soul had been on the stage. I had bathed in Shakespeare, studied the fine old comedies, attended first nights, and was the leading spirit of an amateur theatrical club in the back end of Westminster. Oh, God, those glorious nights when I strutted the stage of our dismal little hall in the characters of Tony Lumpkin and Andrew Aguecheek! I was never cast for the tragic parts that I thought I was born to play. . . . I was successful as a doctor and my practice grew large. But the call of the theatre was always in my ears, and the magnet of the footlights drew me incessantly from my work. I fought against it for the sake of my dear old father and his ambition, and suffered the agonies of the damned for years in my Bloomsbury consulting-room. But one day I blurted out my secret to an actor-manager of a famous provincial touring company, who was a patient of mine, and he tempted me with an offer which I—I couldn't resist. I chucked my practice, broke my father's heart, joined the company at a small salary, and became an actor at last. I was the best low comedian my chief had ever had, and as such was cheered to the echo from one end of the provinces to the other. In every small town I had my followers and friends. But I was not happy in these parts. I didn't want to be a comic with a red nose and an unruly wig.

" At last, one night, I got my chance in the big theatre in Edinburgh. In the middle of the week the company was badly hit by an epidemic of influenza. The leading tragedian and his understudy were both knocked over, and so that the curtain might be rung up I was told to go on as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. . . . For ten years that very chance had been the dream of my life. . . . I rushed to the theatre, worked over my nose with wax, and spent hours over my make up and costume. It's true that I was three feet too small, and that the leading man's clothes had to be pinned to fit me, but even the chief, who had always roared at my pretensions, said nice things and wished me luck." . . . His voice was thick, his eyes were filled with tears, and the hand that he raised to his forehead trembled violently. . . . " From the mo-

'ment I went on the stage every line I spoke was received with yell after yell of laughter. The great house shook and reverberated with very agonies of mirth. People rolled and rocked in their seats, and one beautiful girl had to be carried out in pain. Nothing had ever happened like it before in the history of the play. In the language of the leading lady I 'had killed the play stone dead.' I crept away from the stage door a broken and shipwrecked man, without faith, without hope, without charity. I left all my possessions in my lodgings and rushed from that laughing city, haunted by the mocking screams of that audience and of all the world. . . . Mr. Alton and gentlemen, if *that* doesn't constitute a failure worthy of ranking with yours, you can ask George Fraser to kick me off the place."

All four derelicts had been deeply moved by Jones's simply told story. They realized that their own pitiful failures were not more genuine and tragic. Alton was the first to rise and hold out his hand. "You belong," he said generously, and gripped hard. The others followed the old man's example —Passmore exuberantly, with tears still shining on his fat cheeks; Phillpots earnestly with a few words of high-pitched welcome; Fraser cordially, with a frank apology.

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IT was not for Holt, he almost regretted, to trespass among them. He had stuck to his last like the cobbler, although, to tell the truth, necessity and not moral courage had been his taskmaster. If he had had his way he would have painted portraits. It's a rare thing to find a man who is content to remain what he is! But on his way to the door Jones stopped and shook Holt's hand, his face alight with triumph. The novelist murmured congratulations, and his sympathy would have remained warm about him but for the fact that, once again, Jones closed one eye in a deliberate wink.

Holt resented this. It seemed to undermine that outburst and leave it false and insincere. It puzzled and annoyed him so much in fact, that, after saying "good night," he followed Jones out, suspicion aroused again. He was just in time to see the little man jaunting down the cow path with his shadow dancing grotesquely by his side on the moon-splashed turf. "Fraser's first impression was right," Holt said to himself. "There *is* something queer about this," and seeing that the would-be tragedian had turned to the right on the main road he took a short cut across the cabbage field to head him off and have it out. Dodging and ducking and keeping behind the bodies of the great oaks he came finally to the road, and waited for Jones to approach. He was in for another surprise. Jones was glad to see him, welcomed him with a waving hand, and hurried forward with real excitement and triumph.

"Damn them all," he shouted. "Wasn't I right when I said that I could make 'em cry, and hold 'em breathless with my dignity and power? Wasn't I? *Wasn't* I? Look at 'em to-night. Did you ever see anything like it? I had 'em—a pretty tearless lot—not merely cryin', but weepin'—weepin', I tell yer! Without make-up, too; without an atom of paste on my silly-ass nose."

Holt was staggered. "I don't understand," he said. There was deep sincerity here. "Was it simply your purpose then to achieve a histrionic triumph just now? Weren't you keener to qualify for Failure Farm than prove your power to move an audience to tears? Upon my soul, I'm beat."

There was a most curious silence, broken finally by a sigh and a laugh. The whole appearance of that odd creature changed from rather painful exaltation to a sort of dry practicality.

"I've been trying for several days, my dear Holt, to take you into my confidence. But you didn't like me in my character as a cockney sparrow, did you? Which is not to be wondered at. And so you have avoided me and ignored all my overtures. You weren't to know the game I am here to play, so don't apologize."

"Game. Then you confess to playing a game?"

"I do," he said, gravely, "and a very serious one. And as I'm most anxious that your obvious and very natural antagonism shall be withdrawn, I will tell you what it is. I don't need your help because, through Fraser's unconscious assistance, I have won my right to remain at Failure Farm. But I do need your confidence and understanding —especially now as things are going my way. Wait a minute, and I'll put my cards on the table. I can see that you don't know whether you're standing on your head or your heels."

"I don't," said Holt.

And he gave a chuckle. "Every word of

that story of mine was true," he continued, grave again, and eager. "That's why it moved those four poor devils to such genuine emotion. But I didn't finish it. Under the circumstances it didn't seem to be necessary. I'll finish it now. Starving and on the verge of brain fever, I wandered at last into the house of a brother doctor. That was three weeks after I left Edinburgh. He took me in and treated me. He used upon my disturbed brain and shattered spirit the wonderful principles of psycho-analysis, to which he had devoted himself. And eventually, of course, set me on my feet again by influencing me back to the real job that was mine—medicine. I started again in Bloomsbury, convinced that my triumphs would be won as a doctor and not as a tragedian. And from that moment I plunged into my friend and saviour's line of thought. Thank God, I have had the inestimable privilege of rescuing a dozen such poor wretches as I was from despair and suicide. The reason of my being here is to try to do it again."

Holt pulled up short and faced him. "Who are you, then?" he asked.

"Cartwright," said the little man.

"Cartwright? Not *the* Cartwright? Not the man everybody's talking about?"

As he looked up at the novelist, a very humble expression came into the doctor's eyes. "Yes. That Cartwright," he replied quietly. "But that doesn't mean anything here."

Holt caught up his hand. "It means that you saved my brother," he cried out. "It means that no other man in England could cure his shell-shock but you. To me and to him and to his wife and children the name of Cartwright is among our sacred names."

"Thank you," Cartwright said. "The cheers of a hundred audiences couldn't help me as much as those words."

They moved on again, in silence. Both of them had something in their throats. So this was the "something queer" about Jones, the cockney sparrow. He was the famous Dr. John Cartwright, of Russell Square, mender of beaten spirits, builder of shattered nerve systems, renewer of broken hopes.

When he spoke again it was in his most crisp and practical way. "I am combining business with pleasure here," he said, "I needed country air and exercise, early hours and the absence of the cursed telephone. I came to the farm on behalf of Mrs. Passmore, who implored me to work on the professor and persuade him back to his old job."

"By Jove, if only you can."

"If only—how often I am faced by those two pathetic words. However, I shall do my best. And, what's more, being here, I think I can do something for Fraser, Phillpots, and the unfortunate old man. I repeat that I shall do my best. But to do that I must continue, of course, to play the part of Jones, the man who couldn't be tragic and won an honoured place in Failure Farm. I can rely on your not giving me away?"

"Good heavens, yes, indeed!"

"Good. Having been taken into this tragic brotherhood I can now get down to work."

"Do you mind if I ask you about these men? It's not the curiosity of a novelist that prompts me, but the deep interest of one who has a brother."

"I'll rough them out," said the doctor, stopping for a moment to light his pipe. "Let's take old Alton as the first and the most difficult case. The son of Robert Alton, of the famous firm of Alton, Armstrong and Buckmaster, civil engineers, he was educated in engineering. Having inherited the genius of his father as well as the business when the partners died, all he would have had to do was to have stuck to the business and his name would have been on the everlasting list of master bridge-builders."

Holt was amazed. "What, *that* Alton!" he said. "Why, he ought by this time to have been made a peer!"

"Quite so. But on the day that he stepped into his father's shoes he went off at a sudden tangent. He took to writing novels."

"Novels? By an engineer?" Holt laughed.

"Queer notion, wasn't it? And so was his absorbing ambition, which was to succeed to the mantle of Thackeray, give the world a series of satirical masterpieces of social life and be buried in Westminster Abbey. . . . Poor devil! Nothing that he ever wrote was published. Nothing. He sold his business, bought Thackeray's house in Kensington, married, settled down, and, without condescending to consider the sort of thing the public wanted to read, wrote a novel a year. The manuscripts of all these books are lying in a huge box up in one of the lofts. I've been having a look at them. With no plot, no love story, no

hero and no heroine, they are nothing but mordant dissertations on the psychology of society, the scornful analysis of frail humanity."

"And he called them novels?"

"And still maintains that they are. And notwithstanding the fact that as a novelist he is the greatest failure known in the history of letters, it was only when he was reduced to the last thousand pounds of the proceeds of his business, and was fifty-eight years old, that he finally owned to failure and bought this farm. He did that to get away from London and its bitter associations, and to provide Mary, his one masterpiece, with clean air and the certainty of a livelihood. He no longer fingers a pen or thinks in terms of chapters. He is the abject slave of Nature by whose flighty kindness he scrapes a sort of living. The only thing out of which he gets a gleam of pleasure is a game of chess."

"I noticed that. And who was Phillpots?" Holt spoke of him, involuntarily, as though he, too, was over and finished with.

Cartwright accepted the past tense. "Don't you remember the name of Duncan Phillpots—that used to be over the finest block of buildings in Regent Street? Duncan Phillpots—lingerie and corsets, the 'D.P. Union Suit.' He was the man who gave twenty-five years of his life to prison reform, started and edited a revolutionary paper so brilliantly dangerous that he found himself among the very criminals whose lot he tried to remedy, and received five years penal servitude, which broke his spirit and ruined his business. He's now a perfect marvel at raising sheep."

Cartwright gave a short laugh. "Wherever we begin and get, or fail in getting, the earth claims us at the end. As to Passmore, with the grey trousers, he was a history professor at Oxford, who chucked the job for which he was born to try and make money in commerce. He had dreams of a palatial London house crammed with old masters, first editions and intellectuals. He went to the Stock Exchange like a lamb to the slaughter, lost his capital of twenty thousand pounds within twenty days, and trembled on the edge of lunacy for a year. Just escaping, he was ashamed to take up teaching in an inferior position or return to Oxford to live on his wife—so he paced the hard pavement of Fleet Street trying to become a journalist; and when the soles of his last pair of boots had worn away, had them patched with his one remaining shilling and tramped into the country. He worked his way from village to village, and finally was taken on by Alton for the hay-making. I preceded him by just five days. When are you returning to London?"

"I'm leaving to-morrow," said Holt.

"Are you, though? I'm sorry. Well, try to come back at the end of the month. I can't guarantee any miracles, but if you don't find at least one or two changes here I'll eat my hat and yours. And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll keep my belated appointment with Mrs. Passmore at the Black Bull. The poor lady needs cheering. Good night, my dear fellow." His comedian face broke into the most friendly smile.

¶

PRESSURE of work kept Holt in the city well into the new month. But when, eventually, he managed to escape and drove his car to Failure Farm it was to arrive an hour after the evening meal. May, spring's last-born darling, was six days old, and all among the new leaves of those old trees a gentle breeze played, half-teasing, half-tender, while the voice of one who goes before to make the paths of June more beautiful, raised her yearly song.

He left the car in an outhouse, crossed the open yard of cobblestones, and made anxiously for the kitchen. He expected to see Alton's bony face bent, as usual, over the chessboard with the foxy Phillpots sitting opposite; Passmore dozing flabbily, with the "Sonnets" in his soft, white hand; Fraser with his gloomy eyes among the embers of the fire; Mary, with her Madonna smile, seated at the work table, and the aged dog dreaming of youthful hunts in a corner. But as he put out his hand to raise the rusty latch, it was seized by Cartwright, who sprang upon him from the shadow of the wall with a whispered welcome.

It was the same old room with the hanging hams, the uncountable horseshoes, the row of dilapidated boots under the dresser, and the grey-muzzled dog with its head on its paws. But of the usual evening contingent of derelicts only Alton could be seen. It is true that he was bending over the table in the old attitude, with his glasses on his bony nose, but in place of the chessboard there was a pile of manuscript and a bottle of ink. He was writing.

Holt wheeled round in amazement. "What's it mean?" he asked.

Cartwright took his arm and led him round the building and into the courtyard. Holt found himself once more in the doorway of the potato shed under which Fraser had told him his story the night of several surprises. Was this to be another of the same?

"I've not got to eat your hat or mine," said Cartwright, with a wonderful smile. "Passmore went back to Oxford with his wife last Monday. His college gave him a thunderous welcome, and he's the perfect Don again. Duncan Phillpots left on Tuesday for Liverpool. His young brother's business required the master touch, and he has gone into partnership with him to revive the 'D.P. Union Suit'."

There was a whoop of delight. "My dear man, how did you manage it?"

"Suggestion," he replied. "I inoculated them both with the metaphorical virus of their first ambitions, and bit by bit it took. Phillpots was a more difficult patient than Passmore. Prison leaves hideous marks on a man's soul. He will put his whole mind into his old business, but the light has gone out. It is empty. He will fail."

"I'm sorry. What about Alton?"

Cartwright chuckled. "Ah, he was a hard nut, if you like. But I got him going by reading aloud after dinner one of your popular novels. They piqued him and made him dreadfully jealous. They sent him secretly up to the barn where all his life work was. Without a word to a soul he picked out one of his early books and fell on it night after night till the small hours. Then he came to me for advice. Should he cut out all the cynicism and philosophy until only the sheer story remained? 'No,' I said, 'leave it, because times have changed and these things are considered clever. Cut out the whole of the story.' And he did so, and threw it at me to read. 'How about that?' he asked scornfully. . . . My dear fellow, it had best seller stamped upon it. It was all so perfectly new and in the fashion. I sent it up immediately to a publisher friend of mine—without asking his permission. He thinks I'm still wading through it, and is doing the same thing to another in the same spirit of scorn. I've just come back from the post office with the letters. Melville writes to me that he has accepted the book and likes it immensely, and has written to Alton to make him an offer. Here it is."

"Isn't that tremendous!" Holt said, breathlessly.

"He only had to be sufficiently annoyed, you see. I caught him at a moment of savage humility. His pride never let him alter a line before. And as for Fraser, I have a little surprise for him." He held up another unopened letter.

"Fraser—yes, tell me about Fraser. He's too young and fine for this backwater."

Cartwright gripped Holt's arm. "Dr. Mary worked with me on that case," he said. "Look."

He heard voices, and peering out saw the playwright and the spring maid strolling into the yard, laughing and talking.

"Love and a desire to marry and build a nest helped me with Fraser," continued Cartwright under his breath. "The rest was easy. We talked plots the night after you left. I led him along into a long and heated discussion. He only condescended to argue with me because I know the stage. He described his favourite play in detail—aim, thesis, and construction. It was Ibsen without the Ib, so to speak, but, by Jove! with what a gorgeous idea! A twist here, a twist there, speeches shortened, pompous stuff lifted out, the whole thing made a little dirty and, oh, man, what a winner. He asked me what I thought of it, and I said it was masterly, but as dead as the Dodo. He told me that if he chose he could make it a live popular box-office success in two days. And *there* was my chance. I *had* him on my hook."

"How?"

"'Impossible,' I said. 'Pick out a hack dramatist at random and *he* could do it any day of the week, but *you*,' I said—'never in this world. You have lost your touch, that charming light touch that drew all and sundry to your early plays. You could no more popularize that play than turn Cleopatra's needle into a toothpick.' 'Oh, I can't, can't I?' he shouted, black with rage. 'We'll damned well see about that.' And off he went, there and then, with Mary's starlike eyes like beacons in his brain."

"And then what?" Holt could have danced with excitement. His desire to see Failure Farm with a better name was deep and strong. He would never forget the rescue of his brother.

"He did the trick, but took four weeks over it," said Cartwright, showing his teeth. "Result—delightful. A naughty comedy. I'm still supposed to be reading it. Whereas, I need hardly say, it went to his old manager at once, with a letter of explanation. Mean-

time, the itch for writing is on him. The old habit has revived. Every spare hour sees him working for dear life; and this time he's writing for Mary. Love, optimism, sweetness—they're all alive in her mind now, and I can see homesickness pulling at his heart. London, his old den, the clash of intellect, the lights and smells of the theatre, and Mary for a wife."

"Good boy!" said Holt, meaning it both for Fraser and the man who had teased his pen. He was young enough to continue searching for the girl.

Cartwright cleared his throat. "This is going to be the best night I've had for many a long day—or you've had, either. You're a very decent chap."

Holt punched him in the chest by way of gratitude for his praise. "What are you going to do?"

"I'll show you. Being an actor still—every doctor has to act—I'll work up to a curtain and save my surprises for Alton and Fraser, to say nothing of that brave little girl. I hope and believe that Fraser's letter is favourable. I've not heard personally from the manager. If those fellows know how to write they don't practise overmuch."

Holt held out his hand. "Congratulations, Doctor. It's a wonderful science that you've brought to such perfection."

"Is it? I wonder," he said, wincing under that grip. "Do you know, I'm inclined to believe that the new words, psycho-analysis, stand for nothing but two very old ones."

"Really, which?"

"Human sympathy," he replied, and moved out into the courtyard. "Look at those two, standing against the light of the window. They were born for one another. Would to God I had been a twin brother of Fraser's. I might have a sweet girl like that to welcome me home. But who would fall in love with such a face as mine? However, it's time for the finale. Come in with me."

Holt was greeted cordially by Alton and Fraser, very shyly by Mary. He thought that she must have guessed that he had read her secret during his former visit. It had been easy enough.

Jones, as he had immediately become, played postman, pretending, with a touch of comic genius, to be a crabbed old man with asthma and a gouty foot. "One fer Farmer Alton," he said. "T'other fer G. Guthrie Fraser, H'esquire."

It was a long time since Fraser had received a letter addressed like that. He took it quickly, with a startled expression, and examined the handwriting. "Why, this is from Harrison," he said. "Why on earth's he writing to me?" And he stood gazing at it, puzzled and stirred.

Alton watched him with what Holt thought was envy. He evidently considered that his own letter was a bill and put it on his blotting-pad. Mary caught her breath.

"Well," said Jones, with an idiotic grin. "I discovered some years ago that the best way to see what's inside a letter is to open the bloomin' thing."

A sudden thought struck Fraser like a blow. He wheeled round to Jones. "Did you have the impertinence to send that play to Harrison?" he demanded.

"I did," said Jones, putting up his arm to guard his head. "Don't 'it too 'ard, cockey."

"I've a good mind to wring your neck." But the hand that held the letter began to tremble, and the eyes that scanned the address again were filled with the most painful excitement and fear. Perspiration broke out on his forehead and his face went as white as chalk. Finally he handed the letter to Mary. "I'm afraid," he said. "Will you read it, please?"

And Mary took it and opened it and read it aloud: "My dear Fraser, come out of your hiding-place and help me cast your play to-morrow. It will put you back at the top of the ladder, and fill my theatre for a year. . . ." A little cry went up to heaven as the letter fluttered to the floor.

Fraser caught her in his arms and held her against his heart. "You've done this," he said brokenly. "It's yours, as I am."

The man on whom the mantle of Thackeray had never fallen dropped his head on his pad. He was old, very old, and the only failure left except Jones, who didn't seem to mind.

Giving Holt an extraordinary look, in which joy was mixed with triumph, Jones went swiftly to the table. He picked up Alton's letter and handed it to Mary. "You're the one to read this, too," he said.

And she took it with surprise.

Alton shook his head.

Holt hadn't the pluck to go to him and put his hand on the old, bent shoulder. He had had so much of the luck.

And the clear young voice broke the silence once more. "My dear Sir: I beg

to inform you that it will give me the greatest pleasure to publish your most excellent novel at once, and I shall be delighted if you will pay me a visit at your early convenience to discuss an agreement."

"Oh, my God!" cried Alton.

In an instant Mary broke away from Fraser's arms and put the old man's head against her breast.

And Fraser turned and stared hard at the little, impertinent cockney. "There's something queer about this," he muttered.

"Don't you worry about me," said Jones.

And then, with the first gleam of humour that Holt had ever seen him show, Alton rose, his eyes gleaming, his hollow cheeks all wet with tears.

"I'm a failure even as a failure," he said, and laughed and laughed.

Holt was deeply moved by all this. He was a sympathetic soul. It seemed to him that a good angel had waved a wand in that old kitchen. He turned to Cartwright to blurt out some of the amazement that his achievement had stirred in him. But the sight of his face dispelled his words. It had become white and sad. There was a great fatigue in his eyes and all about his queer little body. It was obvious that his effort of will had drawn upon his spirit.

He saw Holt's concern, twisted his mouth into that comic grin, and took his arm. "Let's go out," he said. "My job's over. They don't want me any more."

They need not have taken such pains to go quietly across the stone floor. Alton had gone back to the table and was re-reading the publisher's letter with the most poignant joy. He had no eyes or ears for them. Mary was in her chair again with the familiar workbasket at her elbow, and George was on his knees at her feet, his arms clasped about her slim, sweet body and his head on her breast. The smile that played on her lips was maternal in its beauty. They had forgotten everything but love.

Cartwright drew up at the door and looked back with indescribable wistfulness at Alton's Mary. He put his hand over his heart as he turned away, and Holt heard him give a sigh that ended in a groan.

He led his friend to a place behind the farmhouse which overlooked a sweep of valley. Grouped about its mother church the village was all twinkling with lights. They looked like fireflies. They sat down on a fallen tree, from which all the bark had been peeled away. The sky, star-pitted, was higher above them than it had ever seemed to be. There was no sense of silence, because the insect life was still astir, and along the path which wound its way through a little forest of pines and birches some boys and girls were singing as they walked.

Cartwright spoke suddenly. "Did you hear Fraser say there was something queer about all this?"

"Yes."

"Well, there is."

"Is there? How?"

"I came here on a mission as well as for a short holiday. I was pretty well tired out after a year's incessant work. All I was asked to do, as you know, was to send the professor back to Oxford—to rescue him from his miasma of wounded pride and half-contented sloth. Then I worked as I said I would on all the other poor, talented derelicts, with the results that you have seen. It was a huge effort. I didn't do it scientifically. I did it humanly, and it has left me as empty as a dried-up well."

Holt laid his hand on Cartwright's arm, thinking of all that he had done for his young brother, too.

"The queer part of it all is this," he went on: "Putting these men on their feet again has proved that I am an actor, not a doctor. In succeeding as an actor—I had to play a different part with each of our old friends—I failed as a doctor. And so I'm going to remain on Failure Farm—the one remaining failure."

"You're not!" Holt cried out.

"Yes, I am," he said. "I'm going to buy the place from Alton. I'm very, very tired, old man, and no one knows how lonely. I need the beauty and quietude of this old house. I need the optimism of the earth and the fellowship of trees. And here—as nowhere else—there will always be the spirit of Mary, who will take my heart with her. I shall see her sitting in the old kitchen every night bending over her work-basket. I shall hear her quiet tread on the stairs and her call to the poor old dog. . . . And I shall let it be known, presently, that the man who lives here is a failure—other failures welcome. There are so many of 'em wandering about. See the idea?"

Holt not only saw the idea, but something in Cartwright's eyes that made all arguments foolish. He didn't think that there was anything queer in all this—knowing Cartwright.

A Peg or Two

A Dramatic Tale of Father and Son

By OLIVE WADSLEY

IT is undeniable that Frankie had that certain " way " with him which makes those not bound by affection often express the terse but weighty hope that they may live to see the possessor of this, to them, irritating trait " taken down a peg or two."

But this doubtless salutary experience was apparently not destined to be Frankie's lot; he lorded it at Winchester, he lorded it at Balliol, and even in the trenches he went unsubdued, and lastly, when released from the army owing to a rather bad wound (which had in no way blighted Frankie's outlook upon life), he lorded it in London town, whither he bent his care-free steps before departing by a P. & O. liner for Calcutta, thence to the district to which it had pleased Providence, interpreted in this instance by the Chief Power thereabouts, to call him, and which the C. P. had decided would best test the mettle of young Frankie's skill.

" Isn't he a dear? " women said of Frankie, because he had broad shoulders, great length of limb, and comely slenderness, and a head close-capped by fair, shining hair, and eyes which looked out with indifference upon most of the pleasant world.

Women? Frankie went untroubled by them; they were much too kind to him.

Men liked him, too, and summed him up as became their years as either " a promising young chap," " fine feller," or " a sport."

Frankie felt himself to be all these things, and was glad.

He sounds an abominable prig, but he was not; he was simply full of life, health, and no worries had ever touched him.

He could see in his mirror that the women were not " far out," but he did not bother much about his looks; he spent no unnecessary time at his tailor's, and he had no sparkling taste in ties or socks. His prowess at Oxford had made him pleasantly aware he was no fool, for, despite interruption of a couple of years in the trenches and hospital, he had, upon resumption of his career, done exceedingly well in the I.C.S. exam., as he ought to have done, he freely owned, since his people had been in the Service from time immemorial, and his father was waiting in India to receive him with honour befitting his achievement.

Frankie's " old man " was a bit of a myth to him by now; true he had written regularly, and his father had written regularly, but the latter had not been home for fifteen years, and between twelve and twenty-five the change is meteoric. But if he had not come he had sent Frankie handsome cheques.

Once, during a " Long " in 1913, he had both written and cabled Frankie, begging him to go out.

Of course Frankie had not been able to, his " Long " had been booked up months back, and he was due to go to houses where he knew he would put in a very jolly time.

A year later he had dim ideas of going out, and then the war had blown along, and Frankie had cabled his offer of a commission and his acceptance of it in the same message.

Then his father had cabled suggesting an Indian billet, not because he wished Frankie to shirk France, but because there would be work in India on the frontier, and he could have seen Frankie before the Great Adventure.

Frankie was war-mad then, and France was the only place worth going to, so he cabled back a bit stiffly and received in answer, a message saying " Good luck, old chap, indeed."

Other men, his pals, were bidding goodbye to their people all round him; he came in for farewell scenes at more than one house where he stayed; it made him think of his own little mother, dead ten years before, and made him feel grateful to his father for that sporting last cable.

During the war he had been too busy to write much.

Once, Drake, his father's man, an old chap who had gone out to India with him the Lord knew how many years before, had written suggesting an exchange to a regiment bound East, and the consequent chance of seeing his father, who was " often a bit seedy," but Frankie, living in the midst of a whirl of hellish pain and suffering, had simply felt contemptuous and not answered the letter.

Anyway, he was going to see his father now, and he meant to explain quite fully all about the used-up long vacations.

On the third day out from Marseilles Frankie met Mrs. Darcy, at least he saw her, for she was surrounded by a little court, which was composed of both men and maidens, and everyone seemed very happy and jolly.

" You know the pretty widow ? " Halifax asked Frankie, who owned he did not, and was duly presented.

Mrs. Darcy was little and slight, and had beautifully dressed hair, and eyes which laughed and yet were wistful ; she was well-bred, charming, and just a little elusive.

Frankie knew himself rather " taken," at any rate, he certainly felt " more interested " in Mrs. Darcy than he had hitherto felt for any woman ; besides, she was a different type altogether to his former slight flames.

When Frankie was introduced, she asked him if he were any relation to the Gerald Paxton who had been at Ranipet three years before and had later transferred to a more distant station.

Frankie told her that she had known his father, and Mrs. Darcy was very kind to him, and his fellows looked somewhat coldly on Frankie in consequence, which troubled him not a whit, and he made the running for all he knew.

But he could not say that he got much " forrader " with Mrs. Darcy ; she was charming to him, she danced with him and laughed with him, and sang for him, but she did all these things for others, too ; Frankie was no special recipient of favours.

Once she became directly personal. She said to Frankie :

" You have a splendidly unselfish father."

Frankie replied, rather taken aback, to tell the truth, by this outspoken praise, which went a little against the grain with him, in his modern pose of casualness in all things.

" Oh, I dunno ; he's a very decent sort, the guv'nor."

Mrs. Darcy, who was looking out to sea, a fact which deepened the blueness of her eyes, said gently :

" You have always had every single thing you wanted, haven't you ? "

" Oh, I've scraped along," Frankie agreed, cheerily.

" Has he ? " Mrs. Darcy asked, in a very low voice.

" Has he what ? " Frankie questioned, rather wondering.

" Scraped along ; translated, had every single thing he wanted ? "

Her eyes were starry blue now, and her cheeks faint rose.

" Oh, I think the guv'nor's done himself all right," Frankie said, and he added, for he was really " taken " in his way, " I say, how sweet of you to be interested by my father."

" He was a friend of mine," Mrs. Darcy said, looking once more out to sea.

" He had one of those things worth having, then, if he had your friendship," Frankie said, gallantly.

Mrs. Darcy flashed a smile at him, and asked :

" When shall you be seeing him ? "

" He's coming down to Calcutta to meet me," Frankie told her.

" Is he ? " Mrs. Darcy commented. " I'm so glad."

¶

FRANKIE felt her interest in him was distinctly jolly ; he was flattered, he meant to see a good deal of her in India he told himself. He was not quite sure what he felt about her, but all he felt was pleasant, and happy, and admiring, and he left it, for the time being, at that.

But he saw to it that he, and he alone, " managed " Mrs. Darcy's departure. He had broached the idea rather tentatively to her, that he should " look after her " when the boat berthed, and rather to his surprise, she had accepted almost eagerly.

So it was Frankie who helped her and her maid at Calcutta, and finally took them to their train. He himself had found a wire waiting for him from Drake stating that his father was not very fit, and would not be able to reach Calcutta for a week, but that Frankie was in no case to go up to him, as he was looking forward to meeting him in good health.

Frankie showed the wire to Mrs. Darcy, who said :

" Oh, go, I should never mind what the old servant says. After all, you haven't seen your father for fifteen years, and you will only have a week or so here with him when he does come, and it's so hot there."

" But——" Frankie began.

" It isn't so far either," Mrs. Darcy mused ; " you'd get there, you know, on Wednesday. I go half-way, and think nothing of the journey."

" Oh, you're going in that direction ? " Frankie said.

" Yes. I've decided to see my sister first, after all, and the regiment's at Peshal now."

" D'you know, I believe I'll go up as you suggest," Frankie said slowly, and then sent off natives to collect his things.

He was good to look upon standing there in the brilliant sunshine, his tall, white-clad figure outlined against the sky, a cigarette between his fingers, his whole person expressive of well-being and fine, splendid vigour.

When his traps appeared, he got in beside Mrs. Darcy.

They had a very jolly little run, lunching together off iced things and excellent coffee made by Mrs. Darcy's ayah, who met her at the docks and was nearly hysterical with joy at having her beloved mistress back.

" I have lived in India nearly fifteen years, you know," Mrs. Darcy said, suddenly. " My husband was a judge ; he died on service up country eight years ago, and still I cannot tear myself away from the sunshine, the deadly heat, the glamour, and ache of it. England is home, of course, but "—she shrugged her shoulders, " one is called back and back by India."

And she said, inconsequently :

" I met your father just five years ago. I saw him last just after war broke out ; he seemed tired then, he had worked too long without a sea leave."

" I've always wondered why he didn't come over," Frankie said, easily.

" Ask him," Mrs. Darcy said.

She got out a little later and waved farewell, and sent a message of friendship to his father.

Frankie missed her ; he felt chilly in his soul when she had gone, and all the rest of the journey seemed boring and endless.

But it did end, and when he alighted at last at the little station he wished to goodness he had wired news of his arrival.

It had been Mrs. Darcy who had said : " Oh, surprise them——"

Frankie felt now that surprises were all eye-wash.

However, he got a bullock cart to drive up in finally, and they set off, the driver and himself, for the bungalow.

Frankie viewed the surrounding country with open distaste.

" Beastly place," he muttered.

When the bungalow came in sight he stared at it almost unbelievingly. He had seen a good many bungalows on the journey —this specimen failed in every way to commend itself to him.

As he dismissed the driver and turned to mount the rickety veranda steps an old man appeared, a very little, very shabby old man, dressed in a very faded, if clean, cotton suit. He gave a strangled cry as he saw Frankie, and his face flushed all over darkly. Then he said, in a whisper :

" Master Frankie—why, it's—it's Master Frankie."

" You're Drake, I suppose," Frankie said to him, " but 'pon my soul——" he did not finish the sentence, but in his mind saw a neat, dapper, immaculate manservant of fifteen years before—and now—this !

" Where's my father ? " he asked, not unkindly, smiling distantly.

" Please, Master Frankie," Drake stammered, " please, you mustn't see him, not yet. Y'see, Master Frankie, sir—I should say what with the 'eat, and livin' so shut away——"

" Has he had a stroke, is it fever ? Was that why he couldn't come ? "

Drake said slowly :

' It's a kind o' fever, Master Frankie."

" Oh, bad luck," Frankie said, " but I'll go in ; he may cheer up a bit, seeing me."

And he went forward.

It was a deplorable room he entered, dirty, only half furnished, and in it his father lay in a long chair, stupidly drunk.

Frankie stood and stared at him, at the white, tired face, the white suit, clean, but frayed, the spotless but broken shoes, and the broken furniture, and utter absence of any ordinary comfort.

His own face paled.

Drake touched his arm humbly.

" If you'd just come out o' 'ere, Master Frankie," he whispered, " if you just would, I'd—I'd try to explain."

Frankie went out and before him stretched

the garden, another miserable evidence of neglect and poverty—of drink.

"How long?" he asked, jerking his head slightly in the direction of the room. "How long has this been going on?"

"A matter o' just a few years, sir," Drake said, gently; "it was the 'spenses did it, Master Frankie; we 'ad to take these bad stations, for there was better pay there, an' the master 'e would send over the same sum, good times or bad. 'It's 'is life, Drake,' 'e'd say, 'an' 'e's to 'ave the best, 'e's worth it.' That was you, sir, 'e meant. 'E did 'ave 'opes once that p'raps if you come 'e could explain a bit, I think, Master Frankie; 'e felt afraid of 'imself, of it, the drink. It's only when the loneliness gets too bad, or maybe 'e feels extra down, and even then, as often as not, I can get 'im orf it by talkin' of you maybe, sir, or Mrs. Darcy, the lady, a sweet, pretty lady she was, as I'd 'oped would marry the master, for 'e was crazed on 'er an' she on 'im from all I could see on it, but 'e 'adn't no money, an' she'd a lot, an' you wasn't due to be thro' them exams. till three years later, and then the war came. It was when Mrs. Darcy was about 'e cabled to you to come if you could. I think 'e'd 'opes then of puttin' it all to you, Master Frankie. But you couldn't come, and we 'ad to move to another bad station, an' 'e never spoke to 'er. She wrote, she'll write sometimes now, and it's after 'e's 'ad a letter 'e's worst sometimes. 'E didn't never mean you to know, sir, never. 'E'd got his two suits to wear w'en 'e should see you, so's you shouldn't suspect, and 'e was all primed up to meet you, and then this blow came——"

¶

HE stopped suddenly, and drew a shaky old hand slowly across his forehead.

"What blow?" Frankie asked, stonily; he dared not trust his voice, and his eyes were fixed steadfastly on a clump of dusty, dying marigolds.

"'E's—there's been a muddlement, sir, in the work, an' there's the reports to be looked over, to be done and taken down to Sula, to the Chief Commissioner, an' all the figures is mixed, an' the measurements o' land and such—there's been no falsification, but master 'e can't get it out, an' that thieving babu clerk of 'is it was 'oo peached, it's my belief. Anyway, 'e's gone off an' master tried to tackle it alone, an' then——"

He gave a heavy sigh.

"I'd to be away on 'is business, an' when I came back 'e was nearly—like you see now. On'y 'e said again and again to me: 'It's ruin now, ruin—an' 'e added, 'Thank God Frankie's safe.'"

"Where are the books, the reports and all the papers?" Frankie asked him.

"In there, sir; and it's a rare 'eap, it is."

Frankie went in and looked over the mass; a typed note of sharp rebuke from Bombay, another from the Chief Commissioner's station, caught his glance.

Then he sat down, late as it was, and began to read.

His father slept on; once or twice he moaned. The air was heavy with the scent of cheap spirit.

Once, whilst struggling with an abstruse calculation, Frankie paced the floor; he stopped beside his father.

How thin he had grown!

He was his own height, but what an appalling difference there must be in weight.

And the frayed suit—and split white shoes—and Mrs. Darcy.

He forgot the calculation, the report on the revenue of the Eastern district; he saw again Mrs. Darcy's fastidiousness, daintiness, and her "finished" loveliness, and he remembered that diamond and blue morning of glittering summer on the sea when she had said to him, talking of himself and his father: "You have always had every single thing you've wanted, haven't you—has he?"

And he had thought she was keen on him—keen on him!

A stab went through his heart; he had not been sure whether she had been worth the trouble of falling in love with; she had seemed a bit too "oncoming" to him in her interest in his affairs, and all the while she had only talked to him because he was his father's son, the son of the man she loved.

It seemed to Frankie as if all his world were going to pieces before his eyes.

He went back to his reports. He had got a good enough copy, he thought, when he ceased work the next morning. And he meant to take it down to the Chief Commissioner himself. He had a plan to suggest to that High Power down at Sula.

In his weary absorption he had forgotten his father, and suddenly a voice behind him said:

"Frankie."

He was on his feet in a second.

"Been peggin' away at your stuff to fill in the time, sir," he said. He shook hands

with his father, and laughed: "You had a go of fever, subject to it, so old Drake tells me."

His father topped him about half an inch, but he was holding himself upright with a great effort.

"Drake told you that," he said, very low, "and you've been doing this report for me?"

His face worked for a second, then he controlled himself with a great effort.

"May I look at it?"

In silence Frankie fetched the bulky sheets, his father looked them over, the pages rustled in his shaking hands.

At last he said:

"I could never have done it, and if I had failed I should—I should have been dismissed, with loss of pension, for incapability, slovenly service. Frankie, I—I——"

"You reckoned without me, sir, that was all," Frankie said.

He put his glass into his eye and said, in a voice as near normal as he could make it:

"Oh, by the way, I met a Mrs. Darcy coming out, great pal of yours; she sent no end of messages; she's at Peshal; she said I was to tell you."

He tilted on his heels.

"You have toppin' taste, sir."

And his father said, almost in a whisper:

"Frankie, I drink, I'm a drunkard—not always, but—sometimes. You knew and you never even hinted at it. For such a son as you a father can pull up. And there's one thing—knowing I was drunk you did that report. You've given me back my career. On the strength of this report I can put in for a decent station——"

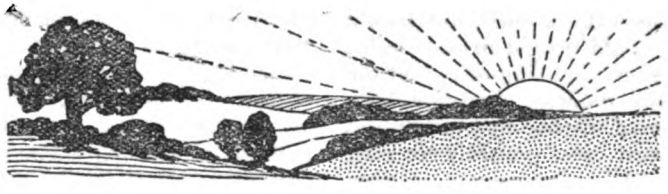
"Good biz," Frankie said. He went up to his father and slid an arm through his.

"Father," he said, "tell that old fool, Drake, to get a move on with some food."

"Rather."

His father disappeared, to come back later in another suit, and buckskin shoes.

"What a knut you look," Frankie said, "no wonder Mrs. Darcy——" and then he laughed, as boyishly as he could.



In Petaled Gown

WHAT is more pleasant than a summer's day
Squandering its lazy and quiet loveliness
Like some fair maiden in a petaled dress
Who charms the fretfulness of life away?
When honeyed sounds make music in the trees,
And wood-fire smoke climbs straight as any spire,
And like a gently modulated choir
Lift the enchanted voices of the bees,
Then sings my heart of universal things—
Of love, of truth, of beauty; and I feel,
While sweet contentments through my body steal,
I would not change my lowly lot with kings.
For on a summer's day, beyond the town
I see my love in gaily petaled gown.

CLARENCE WINCHESTER.

The Jewels

How the affectionate Monsieur Lantin made a discovery

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Here is another delightful example of Guy de Maupassant's masterly work. His genius needs no stressing, for every line is alive with it, revealing all the skill of a master-hand.

MONSIEUR LANTIN met her at an evening party at the house of the head-assistant of the departmental office in which he worked. She was still a girl and Monsieur Lantin fell head over ears in love with her. She was the daughter of a provincial tax-collector, who had died some years previously. She and her mother came to live in Paris, and the mother, in the hope of securing a husband for her daughter, cultivated the acquaintance of several middle-class families in the neighbourhood. Both mother and daughter were poor, but of good principles; quiet, agreeable people. The daughter seemed a perfect type of the thoroughly trustworthy woman, to whom a prudent youth would delight to confide his future. Her beauty and simplicity had the charm of angelic modesty, and the faint smile that hovered on her lips seemed an index of her heart. Her praises were sung by everyone, and her acquaintances were never weary of repeating:

"He will be a lucky man who gets her. There isn't a better girl anywhere."

Monsieur Lantin, who at that time was principal clerk in the Ministry of the Interior, at an annual salary of three thousand five hundred francs, asked her hand in marriage, and she became his wife.

His happiness with her was indescribable. She kept house for him with such skill and economy that they seemed to live in luxury. She lavished upon her husband every conceivable attention, consideration and endearment, and her personal charm was such, that six years from their first meeting, he was more in love with her than ever. She had only two weaknesses with which he was disposed to quarrel, a taste for the theatre and a liking for imitation jewellery. Among her friends were several ladies, the wives of officials of modest rank, who were always providing her with boxes for plays that were in vogue, or even for first nights, and she would drag her husband, willy-nilly, to these entertainments, which wore him to death after his day's work. He begged her, accordingly, to agree to go to the play with some lady of her acquaintance, who would bring her home afterwards. But she did not think this arrangement quite proper, and it was long before she gave way. At last, however, in order to please him, she yielded, and he was infinitely grateful to her.

Naturally this taste for theatre-going soon begot in her a desire for personal adornment. Her dresses retained their simplicity; they were in good taste but unostentatious, and from their very plainness, her sweet and irresistible grace of manner, so unpretentious and winning, gained an added charm. She acquired, however, the habit of wearing in her ears two great Rhine pebbles, resembling diamonds. She would also deck herself with necklaces of false pearls, bracelets of imitation gold, and combs set with bits of glass, coloured to resemble various jewels.

Her husband, whose taste was somewhat offended by this love of glitter, would remonstrate with her:

"My love, people who cannot afford genuine jewellery should trust to their natural grace and beauty. These are the most precious of all jewels."

To this, with a gentle smile, she would rejoin:

"It can't be helped. I love these things. It is my little vice. Of course you are right. Still one is as one is made. If I had had real jewels, I should have adored them too!"

Then she would run her fingers through her pearl necklaces, or admire the sparkling of her cut pebbles, and say:

"Look how good the workmanship is. Anyone would swear it was genuine."

Then he would smile and declare that she had Bohemian tastes.

Occasionally when they were sitting alone together by the evening fire, she would bring to the table the morocco box in which she kept her " trumpery," as her husband called it. Then she would set herself to examine these imitation jewels of hers with passionate concentration, as if she derived from them some deep and secret joy. Sometimes she insisted on trying a necklace on her husband, and would then burst into peals of laughter.

" You funny old thing ! " she would exclaim, and throw herself into his arms and kiss him ardently.

One winter night she went to the Opera. When she returned she was shivering with cold. Next morning she had a cough. A week later she died of inflammation of the lungs.

Lantin came near to following her into the grave. His despair was so terrible that his hair turned white in a single month. He wept from morning till night. His soul was rent by intolerable anguish ; he was haunted by the remembrance of the smile, the voice, all the charm of his departed wife. Nor did his grief at all abate with time. Often during office hours when his colleagues happened to be discussing the topics of the moment, they would see his cheeks suddenly puff out and his eyes fill with tears ; his face would contort horribly and he would burst into sobs. He kept his wife's room intact, and he shut himself up in it every day to think of her. Every article of furniture and even her clothes, remained where they had been on the day of her death.

Life, however, became difficult for him. His salary, which, under his wife's management, had sufficed for all the requirements of the house, had now become inadequate for himself alone. He speculated with amazement as to how she had contrived to supply him with excellent wines and delicious food, which he could no longer procure with his limited resources.

He contracted debts here and there, and in the hunt for money had to employ all the shifts familiar to the impecunious. At last one morning, a whole week before pay-day, he found himself without a penny, and it occurred to him that he might sell something. Hard upon this came the idea that he might rid himself of his wife's " trumpery." In the depths of his heart, even before her death, he had always harboured a grudge against these shams. And now the mere sight of them daily rather spoilt for him the memory of his beloved.

After a long search through the pile of gew-gaws which she had left, for she had persisted unto the end in buying them, adding almost every evening some new object to her collection, he fixed upon the long necklace which seemed to be her favourite, and which might, he thought, be worth six or eight francs, the workmanship being really admirable for an imitation. He slipped it into his pocket, and on his way to the office, went by the boulevards, keeping a look-out for some jeweller's shop that he could trust. At last he saw one and went in, feeling rather ashamed at having to expose his poverty by trying to sell a thing of such small value.

" Will you kindly let me know," he said to the jeweller, " what value you put on this article ? "

The jeweller took the necklace in his hands, examined it, turned it over and over, tried the weight of it, inspected it through a magnifying glass, called his assistant and exchanged remarks with him in an undertone, laid the necklace on the counter and looked at it from a distance, the better to judge of the effect. Provoked by these ceremonies, Monsier Lantin had it on the tip of his tongue to protest that he was quite aware that the thing was of no value, when the jeweller delivered his verdict :

" It is worth from twelve to fifteen thousand francs, but I cannot buy it unless you let me know exactly how you came by it."

The widower opened his eyes to their full extent. His mouth gaped wide. At last he stammered out :

" You say . . . you are sure . . ."

Misinterpreting his amazement, the jeweller retorted dryly :

" Better try somewhere else, if you think you can get more. That's all it's worth to me. Fifteen thousand at the outside. If you find you can't do better than that, you can come back to me."

Completely dumbfounded, Monsieur Lantin picked up his necklace, and left the shop ; he was constrained by a bewildered desire for solitary reflection. But the moment he found himself in the street again, he could hardly restrain his laughter.

" What an idiot ! " he said to himself.

"What an idiot! Suppose I had taken him at his word! Fancy a jeweller not knowing real from false!"

He tried another jeweller at the beginning of the Rue de la Paix. As soon as the second jeweller set eyes on the necklace, he exclaimed:

"Ah, to be sure. I recognize this. It came from my shop."

Greatly disturbed in mind, Monsieur Lantin asked what its value was.

"Well, sir, I sold it for twenty-five thousand, and I am ready to take it back for eighteen. But to satisfy the law, you must let me know how it came into your possession."

Paralysed with amazement, Monsieur Lantin dropped into a chair.

"But . . . but . . . pray examine it carefully . . . I always believed it was . . . imitation."

"Will you give me your name, sir?" rejoined the jeweller.

"Certainly. My name is Lantin. I am in the Ministry of the Interior, and my address is 16, Rue des Martyrs."

The jeweller turned up his books, and after a search said:

"That's right. This necklace was sent to Madame Lantin at the address you mention, on the 20th July, 1876."

The two men looked hard at each other, Monsieur Lantin stricken with astonishment, the jeweller apprehending some knavery.

"Will you," the latter resumed, "leave this necklace in my charge for twenty-four hours only? I will give you a receipt for it."

Still stammering, Monsieur Lantin consented, and folding the receipt put it in his pocket. He crossed the street, walked to the end of it, realized that he was going the wrong way, and regained the Champs-Elysées without a clear idea in his head. It was impossible for his wife to buy an article of such value. Absolutely impossible! It followed that the necklace must have been a gift. A gift? But from whom? And why?

He halted and stood still in the middle of the avenue, touched by the first breath of a horrible suspicion. She? His wife? And all the other jewels, too, must have been presents. The solid earth trembled beneath his feet. A tree in front of him swayed and fell; he stretched out his arms and collapsed, insensible. He regained consciousness in a chemist's shop, to which the passers-by had carried him. He had himself taken home, and there he shut himself up in his room. He wept frantically until nightfall, biting his handkerchief to keep himself from crying out aloud. Broken with weariness and grief, he went to bed and slept heavily. Awakened by the morning sun, he rose and made himself ready to go to office. But it was hard to have to work after sustaining such a shock, and it occurred to him that he could write to his chief and excuse himself. This he did. Then he remembered that he had to go to the jeweller's, and he flushed with shame. He considered the question for a long time. But he could hardly leave the necklace with that man. So he put on his coat and went out.

It was a fine day, and the city seemed to smile beneath its canopy of blue sky. He watched men strolling along with their hands in their pockets, and as he saw them go past, he thought how lucky people were who had plenty of money. With money a man could shake off his sorrows, go where he pleased, travel about the world and never be bored. Oh, if only he were rich!

He had eaten nothing since the previous evening, and became conscious of the pangs of hunger. But his pockets were empty, and this fact made him remember the necklace. Eighteen thousand francs! Eighteen thousand francs! That was indeed a sum. Arrived at the Rue de la Paix he began to walk up and down on the pavement opposite the shop. Eighteen thousand francs! A score of times he was on the point of entering, but always his shame held him back. But then, there was his hunger, real hunger, and he had not a penny in his pocket. Suddenly he put an end to his vacillation. So as not to give himself time to think, he crossed the street at a run and plunged into the jeweller's shop.

The moment he saw Monsieur Lantin, the jeweller, with smiling courtesy, hastened to offer him a chair. The assistants stood by, casting side-glances at Lantin, and evidently bubbling over with merriment.

"I have made inquiries, Monsieur Lantin," said the jeweller, "and if you have not changed your mind I am prepared to pay you the sum I mentioned."

In a quivering voice, Lantin signified his agreement, and the jeweller took eighteen large banknotes out of a drawer and handed them over. Lantin signed a receipt and

put the notes in his pocket with a trembling hand.

As he was leaving the shop, he turned to the still smiling jeweller, and with eyes cast down, said :

" I have . . . I have other jewels . . . which I have inherited from the same estate. Would it suit you to buy these from me, too?"

With a bow, the jeweller expressed his readiness. One of the assistants left the shop, so that he could laugh without constraint. Another used his handkerchief violently. But Lantin, impassive and solemn, merely flushed and said that he would bring the remaining jewels, and taking a cab he went home for them. When he returned an hour later, he had not yet broken his fast. The articles were examined and valued one by one. Nearly all of them had been originally bought at the same shop. Lantin was now challenging the valuations, and insisting eagerly on seeing the books of sales, and the larger grew the total, the louder he raised his voice. A pair of large diamond ear-rings fetched twenty thousand francs ; bracelets, thirty-five thousand; brooches, rings and lockets, sixteen thousand; a setting of emeralds and sapphires, fourteen thousand ; a gold necklace with single-stone pendant, forty thousand. The total reached the sum of one hundred and ninety-six thousand francs. On leaving, Lantin agreed with the purchaser that they should have a check-valuation the next day.

Again in the street, Lantin looked at the Vendôme Column and wanted to climb it as if it had been a greasy pole. He felt like playing leap-frog over the statue of the Emperor, perched up there in the sky. He lunched at Voison's and drank wine at twenty francs a bottle. Then he took a cab and went for a drive in the Bois. He looked at the other carriages with a certain disdain, obsessed by a desire to call out to all the passers-by that he, too, was rich. He had two hundred thousand francs !

Presently he remembered his work. He went to the Ministry, entered his chief's room with deliberation, and announced his news.

" I have come, sir, to hand in my resignation. I have inherited three hundred thousand francs."

Then he went and shook hands with all his old colleagues and communicated to them his new scheme of life. He dined that evening at the Café Anglais. Finding himself seated beside a distinguished-looking man, he could not resist the longing to confide in him, and he coyly informed him that he had just come in for four hundred thousand francs. For the first time in his life he went to the theatre without feeling bored.

Six months later he married again. His second wife was a woman of sterling character, but not easy to live with, and she oppressed him horribly.

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The persistence of anæmia, unaccountable by known causes, baffles the resources of the wise and kindly specialist, Professor Van Helsing. Always, when Lucy is left alone, she suffers a relapse and appears more wan-looking than ever. It becomes more and more apparent that her illness and also the "life-eating" mania which affects Renfield, Dr. Seward's mental patient, are traceable to the sinister influence of Count Dracula, whose activities are now centred in England. Van Helsing struggles to come to grips with the uncanny force that threatens Lucy's life.

MEMORANDUM LEFT BY LUCY WESTENRA

SEPTEMBER 17. *Night.*—I write this and leave it to be seen, so that no one may by any chance get into any trouble through me. This is an exact record of what took place to-night. I feel I am dying of weakness, and have barely strength to write, but it must be done if I die in the doing.

I went to bed as usual, taking care that the flowers were placed as Dr. Van Helsing directed, and soon fell asleep.

I was waked by the flapping at the window, which had begun after that sleep-walking on the cliff at Whitby when Mina saved me, and which now I know so well. I was not afraid, but I did wish that Dr. Seward was in the next room—as Dr. Van Helsing said he would be—so that I might have called him. I tried to go to sleep, but could not. Then there came to me the old fear of sleep, and I determined to keep awake. Perversely, sleep would try to come then when I did not want it; so, as I feared to be alone, I opened my door and called out: "Is there anybody there?" There was no answer. I was afraid to wake mother, and so closed my door again. Then outside in the shrubbery I heard a sort of howl like a dog's, but more fierce and deeper. I went to the window and looked out, but could see nothing, except a big bat, which had evidently been buffeting its wings against the window. So I went back to bed again, but determined not to go to sleep. Presently the door opened, and mother looked in; seeing by my moving that I was not asleep, she came in, and sat by me. She said to me even more sweetly and softly than her wont:

"I was uneasy about you, darling, and came in to see that you were all right."

I feared she might catch cold sitting there, and asked her to come in and sleep with me, so she came into bed, and lay down beside me; she did not take off her dressing-gown, for she said she would only stay for a while and then go back to her own bed. As she lay there in my arms, and I in hers, the flapping and buffeting came to the window again. She was startled and a little frightened, and cried out: "What is that?" I tried to pacify her, and at last succeeded, and she lay quiet; but I could hear her poor dear heart still beating terribly. After a while there was the low howl again out in the shrubbery, and shortly after there was a crash at the window, and a lot of broken glass was hurled on the floor. The window blind blew back with the wind that rushed in, and in the aperture of the broken panes there was the head of a great, gaunt grey wolf. Mother cried out in a fright, and struggled up into a sitting posture, and clutched wildly at anything that would help her. Amongst other things, she clutched the wreath of flowers that Dr. Van Helsing insisted on my wearing round my neck, and tore it away from me. For a second or two she sat up, pointing at the wolf, and there was a strange and horrible gurgling in her throat; then she fell over, as if struck with lightning, and her head hit my forehead and made me dizzy for a moment or two. The room and all round seemed to spin round. I kept my eyes fixed on the window, but the wolf drew his head back, and a whole myriad of little specks seemed to come blowing in through the broken window, and wheeling and circling round like the pillar of dust that travellers describe when there is a simoom in the desert. I tried to stir, but there was some spell upon me, and dear mother's poor body, which seemed to grow cold already—for her dear heart had ceased to

beat—weighed me down ; and I remembered no more for a while.

The time did not seem long, but very, very awful, till I recovered consciousness again. Somewhere near, a passing bell was tolling ; the dogs all round the neighbourhood were howling ; and in our shrubbery, seemingly just outside, a nightingale was singing. I was dazed and stupid with pain and terror and weakness, but the sound of the nightingale seemed like the voice of my dead mother come back to comfort me. The sounds seemed to have awakened the maids, too, for I could hear their bare feet pattering outside my door. I called to them, and they came in, and when they saw what had happened, and what it was that lay over me on the bed, they screamed out. The wind rushed in through the broken window, and the door slammed to. They lifted off the body of my dear mother, and laid her, covered up with a sheet, on the bed after I had got up. They were all so frightened and nervous that I directed them to go to the dining-room and have each a glass of wine. The door flew open for an instant and closed again. The maids shrieked, and then went in a body to the dining-room ; and I laid what flowers I had on my dear mother's breast. When they were there I remembered what Dr. Van Helsing had told me, but I didn't like to remove them, and, besides, I would have some of the servants to sit up with me now. I was surprised that the maids did not come back. I called them, but got no answer, so I went to the dining-room.

My heart sank when I saw what had happened. They all four lay helpless on the floor, breathing heavily. The decanter of sherry was on the table half full, but there was a queer, acrid smell about. I was suspicious, and examined the decanter. It smelt of laudanum, and looking on the sideboard, I found that the bottle which mother's doctor uses for her—oh ! did use—was empty. What am I to do ? What am I to do ? I am back in the room with mother. I cannot leave her, and I am alone, save for the sleeping servants, whom someone had drugged. Alone with the dead ! I dare not go out, for I can hear the low howl of the wolf through the window.

The air seems full of specks, floating and circling in the draught from the window, and the lights burn blue and dim. What am I to do ?

CHAPTER XII

Dr. Seward's Diary

SEPTEMBER 18.—I drove at once to Hillingham and arrived early. Keeping my cab at the gate, I went up the avenue alone. I knocked gently and rang as quietly as possible, for I feared to disturb Lucy or her mother, and hoped to bring only a servant to the door. After a while, finding no response, I knocked and rang again ; still no answer. I cursed the laziness of the servants that they should lie abed at such an hour—for it was now ten o'clock—and so rang and knocked again, but more impatiently, and still without response. Hitherto I had blamed only the servants, but now a terrible fear began to assail me. Was this desolation but another link in the chain of doom which seemed drawing tight around us ? Was it indeed a house of death to which I had come, too late ? I knew that minutes, even seconds, of delay might mean hours of danger to Lucy, if she had had again one of those frightful relapses ; and I went round the house to try if I could find by chance an entry anywhere.

I could find no means of ingress. Every window and door was fastened and locked, and I returned baffled to the porch. As I did so, I heard the rapid pit-pat of a swiftly driven horse's feet. They stopped at the gate, and a few seconds later I met Van Helsing running up the avenue. When he saw me, he gasped out :—

" Then it was you, and just arrived. How is she ? Are we too late ? Did you not get my telegram ? "

I answered as quickly and coherently as I could that I had only got his telegram early in the morning and had not lost a minute in coming here, and that I could not make anyone in the house hear me. He paused and raised his hat as he said solemnly :—

" Then I fear we are too late. God's will be done ! " With his usual recuperative energy, he went on : " Come. If there be no way open to get in, we must make one. Time is all in all to us now."

We went round to the back of the house, where there was a kitchen window. The Professor took a small surgical saw from his case, and handing it to me, pointed to the iron bars which guarded the window. I attacked them at once and had very soon cut through three of them. Then with a long, thin knife we pushed back the fastening of the sashes and opened the window. I helped the Professor in, and followed him. There was no one in the kitchen or in the servants' rooms, which were close at hand. We tried all the rooms as we went along, and in the dining-room, dimly lit by rays of light through the shutters, found four servant-women lying on the floor. There was no need to think them dead, for their stertorous breathing and the acrid smell of laudanum in the room left no doubt as to their condition. Van Helsing and I looked at each other, and as we moved away he said : " We can attend to them later." Then we ascended to Lucy's room. For an instant or two we paused at the door to listen, but there was no sound that we could hear. With white faces and trembling hands, we opened the door gently, and entered the room.

How shall I describe what we saw ? On the bed lay two women, Lucy and her mother. The latter lay farthest in, and she was covered with a white sheet, the edge of which had been blown back by the draught through the broken window,

showing the drawn, white face, with a look of terror fixed upon it. By her side lay Lucy, with face white and still more drawn. The flowers which had been round her neck we found upon her mother's bosom, and her throat was bare, showing the two little wounds which we had noticed before, but looking horribly white and mangled. Without a word the Professor bent over the bed, his head almost touching poor Lucy's breast; then he gave a quick turn of his head, as of one who listens, and leaping to his feet, he cried out to me :—

"It is not yet too late! Quick! quick! Bring the brandy!"

I flew downstairs and returned with it, taking care to smell and taste it, lest it, too, were drugged like the decanter of sherry which I found on the table. The maids were still breathing, but more restlessly, and I fancied that the effect of the narcotic was wearing off. I did not stay to make sure, but returned to Van Helsing. He rubbed the brandy, as on another occasion, on her lips and gums and on her wrists and the palms of her hands. He said to me :—

"I can do this, all that can be at the present. You go wake those maids. Flick them in the face with a wet towel, and flick them hard. Make them get heat and fire and a warm bath. This poor soul is nearly as cold as that beside her. She will need be heated before we can do anything more."

I went at once, and found little difficulty in waking three of the women. The fourth was only a young girl, and the drug had evidently affected her more strongly, so I lifted her on the sofa and let her sleep. The others were dazed at first, but as remembrance came back to them they cried and sobbed in a hysterical manner. I was stern with them, however, and would not let them talk. I told them that one life was bad enough to lose, and that if they delayed they would sacrifice Miss Lucy. So, sobbing and crying, they went about their way, half clad as they were, and prepared fire and water. Fortunately, the kitchen and boiler fires were still alive, and there was no lack of hot water. We got a bath, and carried Lucy out as she was and placed her in it. Whilst we were busy chafing her limbs there was a knock at the hall-door. One of the maids ran off, hurried on some more clothes, and opened it. Then she returned and whispered to us that there was a gentleman who had come with a message from Mr. Holmwood. I bade her simply tell him that he must wait, for we could see no one now. She went away with the message, and, engrossed with our work, I clean forgot all about him.

I never in all my experience saw the Professor work in such deadly earnest. I knew—as he knew—that it was a stand-up fight with death, and in a pause told him so. He answered me in a way that I did not understand, but with the sternest look that his face could wear :—

"If that were all, I would stop here where we are now, and let her fade away into peace, for I see no light in life over her horizon." He went on with his work with, if possible, renewed and more frenzied vigour.

Presently we both began to be conscious that the heat was beginning to be of some effect. Lucy's heart beat a trifle more audibly to the stethoscope, and her lungs had a perceptible movement. Van Helsing's face almost beamed, and as we lifted her from the bath and rolled her in a hot sheet to dry her he said to me :—

"The first gain is ours! Check to the King!"

We took Lucy into another room, which had by now been prepared, and laid her in bed and forced a few drops of brandy down her throat. I noticed that Van Helsing tied a soft silk handkerchief round her throat. She was still unconscious, and was quite as bad as, if not worse than, we had ever seen her.

Van Helsing called in one of the women, and told her to stay with her and not to take her eyes off her till we returned, and then beckoned me out of the room.

"We must consult as to what is to be done," he said as we descended the stairs. In the hall he opened the dining-room door, and we passed in, he closing the door carefully behind him. The shutters had been opened, but the blinds were already down, with that obedience to the etiquette of death which the British woman of the lower classes always rigidly observes. The room, therefore, was dimly dark. It was, however, light enough for our purposes. Van Helsing's sternness was somewhat relieved by a look of perplexity. He was evidently torturing his mind about something, so I waited for an instant, and he spoke :—

"What are we to do now? Where are we to turn for help? We must have another transfusion of blood, and that soon, or that poor girl's life won't be worth an hour's purchase. You are exhausted already; I am exhausted too. I fear to trust those women, even if they would have courage to submit. What are we to do for someone who will open his veins for her?"

"What's the matter with me, anyhow?"

The voice came from the sofa across the room, and its tones brought relief and joy to my heart, for they were those of Quincey Morris. Van Helsing started angrily at the first sound, but his face softened and a glad look came into his eyes as I cried out: "Quincey Morris!" and rushed towards him with outstretched hands.

"What brought you here?" I cried as our hands met.

"I guess Art is the cause."

He handed me a telegram :—

"Have not heard from Seward for three days, and am terribly anxious. Cannot leave. Father still in same condition. Send me word how Lucy is. Do not delay.—HOLMWOOD."

"I think I came just in the nick of time. You know you have only to tell me what to do."

Van Helsing strode forward and took his hand, looking him straight in the eyes as he said :—

" A brave man's blood is the best thing on this earth when a woman is in trouble. You're a man, and no mistake. Well, the devil may work against us for all he's worth, but God sends us men when we want them."

Once again we went through that ghastly operation. I have not the heart to go through with the details. Lucy had got a terrible shock, and it told on her more than before, for though plenty of blood went into her veins, her body did not respond to the treatment as well as on the other occasions. Her struggle back into life was something frightful to see and hear. However, the action of both heart and lungs improved, and Van Helsing made a subcutaneous injection of morphia, as before, and with good effect. Her faint became a profound slumber. The Professor watched whilst I went downstairs with Quincey Morris, and sent one of the maids to pay off one of the cabmen who were waiting. I left Quincey lying down after having a glass of wine, and told the cook to get ready a good breakfast. Then a thought struck me, and I went back to the room where Lucy now was. When I came softly in, I found Van Helsing with a sheet or two of notepaper in his hand. He had evidently read it, and was thinking it over as he sat with his hand to his brow. There was a look of grim satisfaction in his face, as of one who has had a doubt solved. He handed me the paper saying only : " It dropped from Lucy's breast when we carried her to the bath."

When I read it, I stood looking at the Professor, and after a pause asked him : " In God's name what does it all mean ? Was she, or is she, mad ; or what sort of horrible danger is it ? " I was so bewildered that I did not know what to say more. Van Helsing put out his hand and took the paper, saying :—

" Do not trouble about it now. Forget it for the present. You shall know and understand it all in good time ; but it will be later. And now what is it that you came to me to say ? " This brought me back to the fact, and I was all myself again.

" I came to speak about the certificate of death. If we do not act properly and wisely, there may be an inquest, and that paper would have to be produced. I am in hopes that we need have no inquest, for if we had it would surely kill poor Lucy, if nothing else did. I know, and you know, and the other doctor who attended her knows, that Mrs. Westenra had disease of the heart, and we can certify that she died of it. Let us fill up the certificate at once, and I shall take it myself to the registrar and go on to the undertaker."

" Good, oh my friend John ! Well thought of ! Truly Miss Lucy, if she be sad in the foes that beset her, is at least happy in the friends that love her. One, two, three, all open their veins for her, besides one old man. Ah yes, I know, friend John ; I am not blind ! I love you all the more for it ! Now go."

In the hall I met Quincey Morris, with a telegram for Arthur telling him that Mrs. Westenra was dead ; that Lucy also had been ill, but was now going on better ; and that Van Helsing and I were with her. I told him where I was going, and he hurried me out, but as I was going said :—

" When you come back, Jack, may I have two words with you all to ourselves ? " I nodded in reply and went out. I found no difficulty about the registration, and arranged with the local undertaker to come up in the evening.

¶

WHEN I got back Quincey was waiting for me. I told him I would see him as soon as I knew about Lucy, and went up to her room. She was still sleeping, and the Professor seemingly had not moved from his seat at her side. From his putting his finger to his lips, I gathered that he expected her to wake before long and was afraid of forestalling nature. So I went down to Quincey and took him into the breakfast-room, where the blinds were not drawn down, and which was a little more cheerful, or rather less cheerless, than the other rooms. When we were alone, he said to me :—

" Jack Seward, I don't want to shove myself in anywhere where I've no right to be ; but this is no ordinary case. You know I loved that girl and wanted to marry her ; but, although that's all past and gone, I can't help feeling anxious about her all the same. What is it that's wrong with her ? The Dutchman—and a fine old fellow he is ; I can see that—said, that time you two came into the room, that you must have *another* transfusion of blood, and that both you and he were exhausted. Now I know well that you medical men speak *in camera*, and that a man must not expect to know what they consult about in private. But this is no common matter, and, whatever it is, I have done my part. Is not that so ? "

" That's so," I said, and he went on :—

" I take it that both you and Van Helsing had done already what I did to-day.

" That's so."

" And I guess Art was in it too. When I saw him four days ago down at his own place he looked queer. I have not seen anything pulled down so quick since I was on the Pampas and had a mare that I was fond of go to grass all in a night. One of those big bats that they call vampires had got at her in the night, and, what with his gorge and the vein left open, there wasn't enough blood in her to let her stand up, and I had to put a bullet through her as she lay. Jack, if you may tell me without betraying confidence, Arthur was the first ; is not that so ? " As he spoke the poor fellow looked terribly anxious. He was in a torture of suspense regarding the woman he loved, and his utter ignorance of the terrible

mystery which seemed to surround her intensified his pain. His very heart was bleeding, and it took all the manhood of him—and there was a royal lot of it, too—to keep him from breaking down. I paused before answering, for I felt that I must not betray anything which the Professor wished kept secret; but already he knew so much, and guessed so much, that there could be no reason for not answering, so I answered in the same phrase: "That's so."

"And how long has this been going on?"

"About ten days."

"Ten days! Then I guess, Jack Seward, that that poor pretty creature that we all love has had put into her veins within that time the blood of four strong men. Man alive, her whole body wouldn't hold it." Then, coming close to me, he spoke in a fierce half-whisper: "What took it out?"

I shook my head. "That," I said, "is the crux. Van Helsing is simply frantic about it, and I am at my wits' end. I can't even hazard a guess. There has been a series of little circumstances which have thrown out all our calculations as to Lucy being properly watched. But these shall not occur again. Here we stay until all be well—or ill." Quincey held out his hand. "Count me in," he said. "You and the Dutchman will tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

When she woke late in the afternoon, Lucy's first movement was to feel in her breast, and, to my surprise, she produced the paper which Van Helsing had given me to read. The careful Professor had replaced it where it had come from, lest on waking she should be alarmed. Her eye then lit on Van Helsing and on me too, and gladdened. Then she looked round the room, and seeing where she was, shuddered; she gave a loud cry, and put her poor thin hands before her pale face. We both understood what that meant—that she had realized to the full her mother's death; so we tried what we could to comfort her. Doubtless sympathy eased her somewhat, but she was very low in thought and spirit, and wept silently and weakly for a long time. We told her that either or both of us would now remain with her all the time, and that seemed to comfort her. Towards dusk she fell into a doze.

Here a very odd thing occurred. Whilst still asleep she took the paper from her breast and tore it in two. Van Helsing stepped over and took the pieces from her. All the same, however, she went on with the action of tearing, as though the material were still in her hands; finally she lifted her hands and opened them as though scattering the fragments. Van Helsing seemed surprised, and his brows gathered as if in thought, but he said nothing.

September 19.—All last night she slept fitfully, being always afraid to sleep, and something weaker when she woke from it. The Professor and I took it in turns to watch, and we never left her for a moment unattended. Quincey Morris said nothing about his intention, but I knew that all night long he patrolled round and round the house.

When the day came, its searching light showed the ravages in poor Lucy's strength. She was hardly able to turn her head, and the little nourishment which she could take seemed to do her no good. At times she slept, and both Van Helsing and I noticed the difference in her, between sleeping and waking. Whilst asleep she looked stronger, although more haggard, and her breathing was softer; her open mouth showed the pale gums drawn back from the teeth, which thus looked positively longer and sharper than usual; when she woke the softness of her eyes evidently changed the expression, for she looked her own self, although a dying one. In the afternoon she asked for Arthur, and we telegraphed for him. Quincey went off to meet him at the station.

When he arrived it was nearly six o'clock, and the sun was setting full and warm, and the red light streamed in through the window and gave more colour to the pale cheeks. When he saw her, Arthur was simply choking with emotion, and none of us could speak. In the hours that had passed, the fits of sleep, or the comatose condition that passed for it, had grown more frequent, so that the pauses when conversation was possible were shortened. Arthur's presence, however, seemed to act as a stimulant; she rallied a little, and spoke to him more brightly than she had done since we arrived. He too pulled himself together, and spoke as cheerily as he could, so that the best was made of everything.

¶

IT is now nearly one o'clock, and he and Van Helsing are sitting with her. I am to relieve them in a quarter of an hour, and I am entering this on Lucy's phonograph. Until six o'clock they are to try to rest. I fear that to-morrow will end our watching, for the shock has been too great; the poor child cannot rally. God help us all.

Letter, Mina Harker to Lucy Westenra
(Unopened by her)

"My dearest Lucy,— *September* 17.

"It seems *an age* since I heard from you, or indeed since I wrote. You will pardon me, I know, for all my faults when you have read all my budget of news. Well, I got my husband back all right; when we arrived at Exeter there was a carriage waiting for us, and in it, though he had an attack of gout, Mr. Hawkins. He took us to his own house, where there were rooms for us all nice and comfortable, and we dined together. After dinner Mr. Hawkins said:—

"'My dears, I want to drink your health and prosperity; and may every blessing attend you both. I know you both from children, and have,

with love and pride, seen you grow up. Now I want you to make your home here with me. I have left to me neither chick nor child; all are gone, and in my will I have left you everything.' I cried, Lucy dear, as Jonathan and the old man clasped hands. Our evening was a very, very happy one.

"So here we are, installed in this beautiful old house, and from both my bedroom and drawing-room I can see the great elms of the cathedral close, with their great black stems standing out against the old yellow stone of the cathedral; and I can hear the rooks overhead cawing and cawing and chattering and gossiping all day, after the manner of rooks—and humans. I am busy, I need not tell you, arranging things and housekeeping. Jonathan and Mr. Hawkins are busy all day; for, now that Jonathan is a partner, Mr. Hawkins wants to tell him all about the clients.

"How is your dear mother getting on? I wish I could run up to town for a day or two to see you, dear, but I dare not go yet, with so much on my shoulders; and Jonathan wants looking after still. He is beginning to put some flesh on his bones again, but he was terribly weakened by the long illness; even now he sometimes starts out of his sleep in a sudden way and awakes all trembling until I can coax him back to his usual placidity. However, thank God, these occasions grow less frequent as the days go on, and they will in time pass away altogether, I trust. And now I have told you my news, let me ask yours. When are you to be married, and where, and who is to perform the ceremony, and what are you to wear, and is it to be a public or a private wedding? Tell me all about it, dear; tell me all about everything, for there is nothing which interests you which will not be dear to me. Jonathan asks me to send his 'respectful duty,' but I do not think that is good enough from the junior partner of the important firm of Hawkins and Harker; and so, as you love me, and he loves me, and I love you with all the moods and tenses of the verb, I send you simply his 'love' instead. Good-bye, my dearest Lucy, and all blessings on you.

"Yours,
"MINA HARKER."

Report from Patrick Hennessey, M.D., M.R.C.S., L.K.Q.C.P.I., etc., etc., to John Seward, M.D.

"*September* 20.

"My dear Sir,—

"In accordance with your wishes, I enclose report of the conditions of everything left in my charge. . . . With regard to patient, Renfield, there is more to say. He has had another outbreak which might have had a dreadful ending, but which, as it fortunately happened, was unattended by any unhappy results. This afternoon a carrier's cart with two men made a call at the empty house whose grounds abut on ours—the house to which, you will remember, the patient twice ran away. The men stopped at our gate to ask the porter their way, as they were strangers. I was myself looking out of the study window, having a smoke after dinner, and saw one of them come up to the house. As he passed the window of Renfield's room, the patient began to rate him from within, and called him all the foul names he could lay his tongue to. The man, who seemed a decent fellow enough, contented himself by telling him to 'shut up for a foul-mouthed beggar,' whereon our man accused him of robbing him and wanting to murder him and said that he would hinder him if he were to swing for it. I opened the window and signed to the man not to notice, so he contented himself after looking the place over and making up his mind as to what kind of a place he had got to by saying: 'Lor' bless yer, sir, I wouldn't mind what was said to me in a bloomin' madhouse. I pity ye and the guv'nor for havin' to live in the house with a wild beast like that.' Then he asked the way civilly enough, and I told him where the gate of the empty house was; he went away, followed by threats and curses and revilings from our man. I went down to see if I could make out any cause for his anger, since he is usually such a well-behaved man, and except his violent fits nothing of the kind had ever occurred. I found him, to my astonishment, quite composed and most genial in his manner. I tried to get him to talk of the incident, but he blandly asked me questions as to what I meant, and led me to believe that he was completely oblivious of the affair. It was, I am sorry to say, however, only another instance of his cunning, for within half an hour I heard of him again. This time he had broken out through the window of his room, and was running down the avenue. I called to the attendants to follow me, and ran after him, for I feared he was intent on some mischief. My fear was justified when I saw the same cart which had passed before coming down the road, having on it some great wooden boxes. The men were wiping their foreheads, and were flushed in the face, as if with violent exercise. Before I could get up to him the patient rushed at them, and pulling one of them off the cart, began to knock his head against the ground. If I had not seized him just at the moment I believe he would have killed the man there and then. The other fellow jumped down and struck him over the head with the butt-end of his heavy whip. It was a terrible blow; but he did not seem to mind it, but seized him also, and struggled with the three of us, pulling us to and fro as if we were kittens. You know I am no light weight, and the others were both burly men. At first he was silent in his fighting; but as we began to master him, and the attendants were putting a strait-waistcoat on him, he began to shout: 'I'll frustrate them! They shan't rob me! they shan't murder me by inches! I'll fight for my Lord and Master!' and all sorts of similar incoherent ravings. It

was with very considerable difficulty that they got him back to the house and put him in the padded room. One of the attendants, Hardy, had a finger broken. However, I set it all right; and he is going on well.

"The two carriers were at first loud in their threats of action for damages, and promised to rain all the penalties of the law on us. Their threats were, however, mingled with some sort of indirect apology for the defeat of the two of them by a feeble madman. They said that if it had not been for the way their strength had been spent in carrying and raising the heavy boxes to the cart they would have made short work of him. They gave as another reason for their defeat the extraordinary state of drouth to their occupation and the reprehensible distance from the scene of their labours of any place of public entertainment. I quite understood their drift, and after a stiff glass of grog, or rather more of the same, and with each a sovereign in hand, they made light of the attack, and swore that they would encounter a worse madman any day for the pleasure of meeting so 'bloomin' good a bloke' as your correspondent. I took their names and addresses, in case they might be needed. They are as follows:—Jack Smollet, of Dudding's Rents, King George's Road, Great Walworth, and Thomas Snelling, Peter Parley's Row, Guide Court, Bethnal Green. They are both in the employment of Harris & Sons, Moving and Shipment Company, Orange Master's Yard, Soho.

"I shall report to you any matter of interest occurring here, and shall wire you at once if there is anything of importance.

"Believe me, dear Sir,
"Yours faithfully,
"PATRICK HENNESSEY."

Letter, Mina Harker to Lucy Westenra
(Unopened by her)

"*September* 18.

"My dearest Lucy,—

"Such a sad blow has befallen us. Mr. Hawkins has died very suddenly. Some may not think it so sad for us, but we had both come to love him so that it really seems as though we had lost a father. I never knew either father or mother, so that the dear old man's death is a real blow to me. Jonathan is greatly distressed. It is not only that he feels sorrow, deep sorrow, for the dear, good man who has befriended him all his life, and now at the end has treated him like his own son and left him a fortune which to people of our modest bringing up is wealth beyond the dream of avarice, but Jonathan feels it on another account. He says the amount of responsibility which it puts upon him makes him nervous. He begins to doubt himself. I try to cheer him up, and *my* belief in *him* helps him to have a belief in himself. But it is here that the grave shock that he experienced tells upon him the most. Oh, it is too hard that a sweet, simple, noble, strong nature such as his—a nature which enabled him, by our dear, good friend's aid, to rise from clerk to master in a few years—should be so injured that the very essence of its strength is gone. Forgive me, dear, if I worry you with my troubles in the midst of your own happiness; but, Lucy dear, I must tell someone, for the strain of keeping up a brave and cheerful appearance to Jonathan tries me, and I have no one here that I can confide in. I dread coming up to London, as we must do the day after to-morrow; for poor Mr. Hawkins left in his will that he was to be buried in the grave with his father. As there are no relations at all, Jonathan will have to be chief mourner. I shall try to run over to see you, dearest, if only for a few minutes. Forgive me for troubling you. With all blessings,

"Your loving
"MINA HARKER."

DR. SEWARD'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER 20.—Only resolution and habit can let me make an entry to-night. I am too miserable, too low-spirited, too sick of the world and all in it, including life itself, that I would not care if I heard this moment the flapping of the wings of the angel of death. And he has been flapping those wings to some purpose of late—Lucy's mother and Arthur's father, and now . . . Let me get on with my work.

I duly relieved Van Helsing in his watch over Lucy. We wanted Arthur to go to rest also, but he refused at first. It was only when I told him that we should want him to help us during the day, and that we must not all break down for want of rest, lest Lucy should suffer, that he agreed to go. Van Helsing was very kind to him. "Come, my child," he said; "come with me. You are sick and weak, and have had much sorrow and much mental pain, as well as that tax on your strength that we know of. You must not be alone; for to be alone is to be full of fears and alarms. Come to the drawing-room, where there is a big fire, and there are two sofas. You shall lie on one, and I on the other, and our sympathy will be comfort to each other, even though we do not speak, and even if we sleep." Arthur went off with him, casting back a longing look on Lucy's face, which lay on her pillow, almost whiter than the lawn. She lay quite still, and I looked round the room to see that all was as it should be. I could see that the Professor had carried out in this room as in the other, his purpose of using the garlic; the whole of the window-sashes reeked with it, and round Lucy's neck, over the silk handkerchief which Van Helsing made her keep on, was a rough chaplet of the same odorous flowers. Lucy was breathing somewhat stertorously, and her face was at its worst, for the open mouth showed the pale gums. Her teeth, in the dim, uncertain light, seemed longer and sharper than they had been in the morning. In particular,

by some trick of the light, the canine teeth looked longer and sharper than the rest. I sat down by her, and presently she moved uneasily. At the same moment there came a sort of dull flapping or buffeting at the window. I went over to it softly, and peeped out by the corner of the blind. There was a full moonlight, and I could see that the noise was made by a great bat, which wheeled round—doubtless attracted by the light, although so dim—and every now and again struck the window with its wings. When I came back to my seat I found that Lucy had moved slightly, and had torn away the garlic flowers from her throat. I replaced them as well as I could, and sat watching her.

Presently she woke, and I gave her food, as Van Helsing had prescribed. She took but a little, and that languidly. There did not seem to be with her now the unconscious struggle for life and strength that had hitherto so marked her illness. It struck me as curious that the moment she became conscious she pressed the garlic flowers close to her. It was certainly odd that whenever she got into that lethargic state, with the stertorous breathing, she put the flowers from her; but that when she waked she clutched them close. There was no possibility of making any mistake about this, for in the long hours that followed, she had many spells of sleeping and waking, and repeated both actions many times.

¶

At six o'clock Van Helsing came to relieve me. Arthur had then fallen into a doze, and he mercifully let him sleep on. When he saw Lucy's face I could hear the hissing indraw of his breath, and he said to me in a sharp whisper: "Draw up the blind; I want light!" Then he bent down, and, with his face almost touching Lucy's, examined her carefully. He removed the flowers and lifted the silk handkerchief from her throat. As he did so he started back, and I could hear his ejaculation, "Mein Gott!" as it was smothered in his throat. I bent over and looked, too, and as I noticed some queer chill came over me.

The wounds on the throat had absolutely disappeared.

For fully five minutes Van Helsing stood looking at her, with his face at its sternest. Then he turned to me and said calmly:—

"She is dying. It will not be long now. It will be much difference, mark me, whether she dies conscious or in her sleep. Wake that poor boy, and let him come and see the last; he trusts us, and we have promised him."

I went to the dining-room and waked him. He was dazed for a moment, but when he saw the sunlight streaming in through the edges of the shutters he thought he was late, and expressed his fear. I assured him that Lucy was still asleep, but told him as gently as I could that both Van Helsing and I feared that the end was near. He covered his face with his hands, and slid down on his knees by the sofa, where he remained, perhaps a minute, with his head buried, praying, whilst his shoulders shook with grief. I took him by the hand and raised him up. "Come," I said, "my dear old fellow, summon all your fortitude; it will be best and easiest for *her*."

When we came into Lucy's room I could see that Van Helsing had, with his usual forethought, been putting matters straight and making everything look as pleasing as possible. He had even brushed Lucy's hair, so that it lay on the pillow in its usual shiny ripples. When we came into the room she opened her eyes, and seeing him, whispered softly:—

"Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come!" He was stooping to kiss her, when Van Helsing motioned him back. "No," he whispered, "not yet! Hold her hand; it will comfort her more."

So Arthur took her hand and knelt beside her, and she looked her best, with all the soft lines matching the angelic beauty of her eyes. Then gradually her eyes closed, and she sank to sleep. For a little bit her breast heaved softly, and her breath came and went like a tired child's.

And then insensibly there came the strange change which I had noticed in the night. Her breathing grew stertorous, the mouth opened, and the pale gums, drawn back, made the teeth look longer and sharper than ever. In a sort of sleep-waking, vague, unconscious way she opened her eyes, which were now dull and hard at once, and said in a soft voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips:—

"Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come! Kiss me!" Arthur bent eagerly over to kiss her; but at that instant Van Helsing, who, like me, had been startled by her voice, swooped upon him, and catching him by the neck with both hands, dragged him back with a fury of strength which I never thought he could have possessed, and actually hurled him almost across the room.

"Not for your life!" he said; "not for your living soul and hers!" And he stood between them like a lion at bay.

Arthur was so taken aback that he did not for a moment know what to do or say; and before any impulse of violence could seize him he realized the place and the occasion, and he stood silent, waiting.

I kept my eyes fixed on Lucy, as did Van Helsing, and we saw a spasm as of rage flit like a shadow over her face; the sharp teeth champed together. Then her eyes closed, and she breathed heavily.

Very shortly after she opened her eyes in all their softness, and putting out her poor pale, thin hand, took Van Helsing's great brown one; drawing it to her, she kissed it. "My true friend," she said, in a faint voice, but with untellable pathos, "my true friend, and his! Oh, guard him, and give him peace!"

"I swear it!" said he solemnly, kneeling,

beside her and holding up his hand, as one who registers an oath. Then he turned to Arthur, and said to him: "Come, my child, take her hand in yours, and kiss her on the forehead, and only once."

Their eyes met instead of their lips; and so they parted.

Lucy's eyes closed; and Van Helsing, who had been watching closely, took Arthur's arm, and drew him away.

And then Lucy's breathing became stertorous again, and all at once it ceased.

"It is all over," said Van Helsing. "She is dead!"

I took Arthur by the arm, and led him away to the drawing-room, where he sat down, and covered his face with his hands, sobbing in a way that nearly broke me down to see.

I went back to the room, and found Van Helsing looking at poor Lucy, and his face was sterner than ever. Some change had come over her body. Death had given back part of her beauty, for her brow and cheeks had recovered some of their flowing lines; even the lips had lost their deadly pallor. It was as if the blood, no longer needed for the working of the heart, had gone to make the harshness of death as little rude as might be.

"We thought her dying whilst she slept,
And sleeping when she died."

I stood beside Van Helsing, and said:

"Ah, well, poor girl, there is peace for her at last. It is the end!"

He turned to me, and said solemnly:

"Not so; alas! not so. It is only the beginning!"

When I asked him what he meant, he only shook his head and answered:

"We can do nothing as yet. Wait and see."

Woman.

MAN has his will—but woman has her way. O. W. HOLMES.

There are only two kinds of women, the plain and the coloured. OSCAR WILDE.

God's rarest blessing is, after all, a good woman. G. MEREDITH.

Woman's dearest delight is to wound man's self-conceit, though man's dearest delight is to gratify hers. G. B. SHAW.

Forbear to distribute among all women the guilt of a few. OVID.

What is woman? Only one of Nature's agreeable blunders. MRS. H. COWLEY.

CHAPTER XIII

DR. SEWARD'S DIARY (*continued*)

THE funeral was arranged for the next succeeding day, so that Lucy and her mother might be buried together. I attended to all the ghastly formalities, and the urbane undertaker proved that his staff were afflicted—or blessed—with something of his own obsequious suavity. Even the woman who performed the last offices for the dead remarked to me, in a confidential, brother-professional way, when she had come out from the death-chamber:

"She makes a very beautiful corpse, sir. It's quite a privilege to attend on her. It's not too much to say that she will do credit to our establishment!"

I noticed that Van Helsing never kept far away. This was possible from the disordered state of things in the household. There were no relatives at hand; and as Arthur had to be back the next day to attend at his father's funeral, we were unable to notify anyone who should have been bidden. Under the circumstances, Van Helsing and I took it upon ourselves to examine papers, etc. He insisted upon looking over Lucy's papers himself. I asked him why, for I feared that he, being a foreigner, might not be quite aware of English legal requirements, and so might in ignorance make some unnecessary trouble. He answered me:

"I know; I know. You forget that I am lawyer as well as a doctor. But this is not altogether for the law. You knew that, when you avoided the coroner. I have more than him to avoid. There may be papers more—such as this."

As he spoke he took from his pocket-book the memorandum which had been in Lucy's breast, and which she had torn in her sleep.

"When you find anything of the solicitor who is for the late Mrs. Westenra, seal all her papers, and write him to-night. For me, I watch here in the room and in Miss Lucy's old room all night, and I myself search for what may be. It is not well that her very thoughts go into the hands of strangers."

I went on with my part of the work, and in another half-hour had found the name and address of Mrs. Westenra's solicitor and had written to him. All the poor lady's papers were in order; explicit directions regarding the place of burial were given. I had hardly sealed the letter, when, to my surprise, Van Helsing walked into the room, saying:

"Can I help you, friend John? I am free, and if I may, my service is to you."

"Have you got what you looked for?" I asked, to which he replied:—

"I did not look for any specific thing. I only hoped to find, and find I have, all that there was—only some letters and a few memoranda, and a diary new begun. But I have them here, and we shall for the present say nothing of them. I shall see that poor lad to-morrow evening, and, with his sanction, I shall use some."

When we had finished the work in hand, he said to me:—

"And now, friend John, I think we may to bed. We want sleep, both you and I, and rest to recuperate. To-morrow we shall have much to do, but for the to-night there is no need of us. Alas!"

Before turning in we went to look at poor Lucy. The undertaker had certainly done his work well, for the room was turned into a small *chapelle ardente*. There was a wilderness of beautiful white flowers, and death was made as little repulsive as might be. The end of the winding-sheet was laid over the face; when the Professor bent over and turned it gently back, we both started at the beauty before us, the tall wax candles showing a sufficient light to note it well. All Lucy's loveliness had come back to her in death, and the hours that had passed, instead of leaving traces of "decay's effacing fingers," had but restored the beauty of life, till positively I could not believe my eyes that I was looking at a corpse.

The Professor looked sternly grave. He had not loved her as I had, and there was no need for tears in his eyes. He said to me: "Remain till I return," and left the room. He came back with a handful of wild garlic from the box waiting in the hall, but which had not been opened, and placed the flowers amongst the others on and around the bed. Then he took from his neck, inside his collar, a little golden crucifix, and placed it over the mouth. He restored the sheet to its place, and we came away.

I was undressing in my own room, when, with a premonitory tap at the door, he entered, and at once began to speak:—

"To-morrow I want you to bring me, before night, a set of post-mortem knives."

"Must we make an autopsy?" I asked.

"Yes, and no. I want to operate, but not as you think. Let me tell you now, but not a word to another. I want to cut off her head and take out her heart. Ah! you a surgeon, and so shocked! You, whom I have seen with no tremble of hand or heart, do operations of life and death that make the rest shudder. Oh, but I must not forget, my dear friend John, that you loved her; and I have not forgotten it, for it is I that shall operate, and you must only help. I would like to do it to-night, but for Arthur I must not; he will be free after his father's funeral to-morrow, and he will want to see her—to see *it*. Then, when she is coffined ready for the next day, you and I shall come when all sleep. We shall unscrew the coffin-lid, and shall do our operation; and then replace all, so that none know, save we alone."

"But why do it at all? The girl is dead. Why mutilate her poor body without need? And if there is no necessity for a post-mortem and nothing to gain by it—no good to her, to us, to science, to human knowledge—why do it? Without such it is monstrous."

For answer he put his hand on my shoulder, and said, with infinite tenderness:—

"Friend John, I pity your poor bleeding heart; and I love you the more because it does so bleed. If I could, I would take on myself the burden that you do bear. But there are things that you know not, but that you shall know, and bless me for knowing, though they are not pleasant things. John, my child, you have been my friend now many years, and yet did you ever know me to do anything without good cause? I may err—I am but man; but I believe in all I do. Was it not for these causes that you send for me when the great trouble came? Yes! Were you not amazed, nay horrified, when I would not let Arthur kiss his love—though she was dying—and snatched him away by all my strength? Yes! And yet you saw how she thanked me, with her so beautiful dying eyes, her voice, too, so weak, and she kiss my rough old hand and bless me? Yes! And did you not hear me swear promise to her, that so she closed her eyes grateful? Yes!

"Well, I have good reason now for all I want to do. You have for many years trust me; you have believe me weeks past, when there be things so strange that you might well have doubt. Believe me, yet a little, friend John. If you trust me not, then I must tell what I think; and that is not perhaps well. And if I work—as work I shall, no matter trust or no trust—without my friend trust in me, I work with heavy heart, and feel, oh! so lonely when I want all help and courage that may be!" He paused a moment, and went on solemnly: "Friend John, there are strange and terrible days before us. Let us not be two, but one, that so we work to a good end. Will you not have faith in me?"

I took his hand, and promised him. I held my door open as he went away, and watched him go into his room and close the door. As I stood without moving, I saw one of the maids pass silently along the passage—she had her back towards me, so did not see me—and go into the room where Lucy lay. The sight touched me. Devotion is so rare, and we are so grateful to those who show it unasked to those we love. Here was a poor girl putting aside the terrors which she naturally had of death to go watch alone by the bier of the mistress whom she loved, so that the poor clay might not be lonely till laid to eternal rest. . . .

I must have slept long and soundly, for it was broad daylight when Van Helsing waked me by coming into my room. He came over to my bedside and said :—

" You need not trouble about the knives ; we shall not do it."

" Why not ? " I asked. For his solemnity of the night before had greatly impressed me.

" Because," he said sternly, " it is too late—or too early. See ! " Here he held up the little golden crucifix. " This was stolen in the night."

" How, stolen," I asked in wonder, " since you have it now ? "

" Because I get it back from the worthless wretch who stole it, from the woman who robbed the dead and the living. Her punishment will surely come, but not through me ; she knew not altogether what she did, and thus unknowing, she only stole. Now we must wait."

He went away on the word, leaving me with a new mystery to think of, a new puzzle to grapple with.

The forenoon was a dreary time, but at noon the solicitor came : Mr. Marquand, of Wholeman, Sons, Marquand and Lidderdale. He was very genial and very appreciative of what we had done, and took off our hands all cares as to details. During lunch he told us that Mrs. Westenra had for some time expected sudden death from her heart, and had put her affairs in absolute order ; he informed us that, with the exception of a certain entailed property of Lucy's father's which now, in default of direct issue, went back to a distant branch of the family, the whole estate, real and personal, was left absolutely to Arthur Holmwood. When he had told us so much he went on :—

" Frankly we did our best to prevent such a testamentary disposition, and pointed out certain contingencies that might leave her daughter either penniless or not so free as she should be to act regarding a matrimonial alliance. Indeed, we pressed the matter so far that we almost came into collision, for she asked us if we were or were not prepared to carry out her wishes. Of course, we had then no alternative but to accept. We were right in principle, and ninety-nine times out of a hundred we should have proved, by the logic of events, the accuracy of our judgment. Frankly, however, I must admit that in this case any other form of disposition would have rendered impossible the carrying out of her wishes. For by her predeceasing her daughter the latter would have come into possession of the property, and, even had she only survived her mother by five minutes, her property would, in case there were no will—and a will was a practical impossibility in such a case—have been treated at her decease as under intestacy. In which case, Lord Godalming, though so dear a friend, would have had no claim in the world ; and the inheritors, being remote, would not be likely to abandon their just rights for sentimental reasons regarding an entire stranger. I assure you, my dear sirs, I am rejoiced at the result, perfectly rejoiced."

He was a good fellow, but his rejoicing at the one little part—in which he was officially interested—of so great a tragedy, was an object-lesson in the limitations of sympathetic understanding.

He did not remain long, but said he would look in later in the day and see Lord Godalming. His coming, however, had been a certain comfort to us, since it assured us that we should not have to dread hostile criticism as to any of our acts. Arthur was expected at five o'clock, so a little before that time we visited the death-chamber. It was so in very truth, for now both mother and daughter lay in it. The undertaker, true to his craft, had made the best display he could of his goods, and there was a mortuary air about the place that lowered our spirits at once. Van Helsing ordered the former arrangement to be adhered to, explaining that, as Lord Godalming was coming very soon, it would be less harrowing to his feelings to see all that was left of his *fiancée* quite alone. The undertaker seemed shocked at his own stupidity, and exerted himself to restore things to the condition in which we left them the night before, so that when Arthur came such shocks to his feelings as we could avoid were saved.

¶

POOR fellow ! He looked desperately sad and broken ; even his stalwart manhood seemed to have shrunk somewhat under the strain of his much-tried emotions. He had, I knew, been very genuinely and devotedly attached to his father ; and to lose him, and at such a time, was a bitter blow to him. With me he was warm as ever, and to Van Helsing he was sweetly courteous ; but I could not help seeing that there was some constraint with him. The Professor noticed it too, and motioned me to bring him upstairs. I did so, and left him at the door of the room, as I felt he would like to be quite alone with her ; but he took my arm and led me in, saying huskily :—

" You loved her, too, old fellow ; she told me all about it, and there was no friend had a closer place in her heart than you. I don't know how to thank you for all you have done for her. I can't think yet. . . ."

Here he suddenly broke down, and threw his arms round my shoulders and laid his head on my breast, crying :—

" Oh, Jack ! Jack ! What shall I do ? The whole of life seems gone from me all at once, and there is nothing in the wide world for me to live for."

I comforted him as well as I could. In such cases men do not need much expression. A grip of the hand, the tightening of an arm over the shoulder, a sob in unison, are expressions of sympathy dear to a man's heart. I stood still

and silent till his sobs died away, and then I said softly to him :—

" Come and look at her."

Together we moved over to the bed, and I lifted the lawn from her face. God ! how beautiful she was. Every hour seemed to be enhancing her loveliness. It frightened and amazed me somewhat ; and as for Arthur, he fell a-trembling, and finally was shaken with doubt as with an ague. At last, after a long pause, he said to me in a faint whisper :—

" Jack, is she really dead ? "

I assured him sadly that it was so, and went on to suggest—for I felt that such a horrible doubt should not have life for a moment longer than I could help—that it often happened that after death faces became softened and even resolved into their youthful beauty ; that this was especially so when death had been preceded by any acute or prolonged suffering. It seemed to quite do away with any doubt, and, after kneeling beside the couch for a while and looking at her lovingly and long, he turned aside. I told him that that must be good-bye, as the coffin had to be prepared ; so he went back and took her dead hand in his and kissed it, and bent over and kissed her forehead. He came away, fondly looking back over his shoulder at her as he came.

I left him in the drawing-room, and told Van Helsing that he had said good-bye ; so the latter went to the kitchen to tell the undertaker's men to proceed with the preparations and to screw up the coffin. When he came out of the room again I told him of Arthur's question, and he replied :—

" I am not surprised. Just now I doubted for a moment myself ! "

We all dined together, and I could see that poor Art was trying to make the best of things. Van Helsing had been silent all dinner-time, but when we had lit our cigars he said :—

" Lord——" but Arthur interrupted him :—

" No, no, not that, for God's sake ! not yet at any rate. Forgive me, sir : I did not mean to speak offensively ; it is only because my loss is so recent."

The Professor answered very sweetly :—

" I only used that name because I was in doubt. I must not call you ' Mr.,' and I have grown to love you—yes, my dear boy, to love you as Arthur."

Arthur held out his hand, and took the old man's warmly.

" Call me what you will," he said. " I hope I may always have the title of a friend. And let me say that I am at a loss for words to thank you for your goodness to my poor dear." He paused a moment, and went on : " I know that she understood your goodness even better than I do ; and if I was rude or in any way wanting at that time you acted so—you remember "—the Professor nodded—" you must forgive me."

He answered with a grave kindness :—

" I know it was hard for you to quite trust me then, for to trust such violence needs to understand ; and I take it that you do not—that you cannot—trust me now, for you do not yet understand. And there may be more times when I shall want you to trust when you cannot—and may not—and must not yet understand. But the time will come when your trust shall be whole and complete in me, and when you shall understand as though the sunlight himself shone through. Then you shall bless me from first to last for your own sake, and for the sake of others, and for her dear sake to whom I swore to protect."

" And, indeed, indeed, sir," said Arthur warmly, " I shall in all ways trust you. I know and believe you have a very noble heart, and you are Jack's friend, and you were hers. You shall do what you like."

The Professor cleared his throat a couple of times, as though about to speak, and finally said :—

" May I ask you something now ? "

" Certainly."

" You know that Mrs. Westenra left you all her property ? "

" No, poor dear ; I never thought of it."

" And as it is all yours, you have a right to deal with it as you will. I want you to give me permission to read all Miss Lucy's papers and letters. Believe me, it is no idle curiosity. I have a motive of which, be sure, she would have approved. I have them all here. I took them before we knew that all was yours, so that no strange hand might touch them—no strange eye look through words into her soul. I shall keep them, if I may ; even you may not see them yet, but I shall keep them safe. No word shall be lost ; and in the good time I shall give them back to you. It's a hard thing I ask, but you will do it, will you not, for Lucy's sake ? "

Arthur spoke out heartily, like his old self :—

" Dr. Van Helsing, you may do what you will. I feel that in saying this I am doing what my dear one would have approved. I shall not trouble you with questions till the time comes."

The old Professor stood up as he said solemnly :—

" And you are right. There will be pain for us all ; but it will not be all pain, nor will this pain be the last. We and you too—you most of all, my dear boy—will have to pass through the bitter water before we reach the sweet. But we must be brave of heart and unselfish, and do our duty, and all will be well ! "

I slept on a sofa in Arthur's room that night. Van Helsing did not go to bed at all. He went to and fro, as if patrolling the house, and was never out of sight of the room where Lucy lay in her coffin, strewn with the wild garlic flowers, which sent, through the odour of lily and rose, a heavy, overpowering smell into the night.

MINA HARKER'S JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 22.—In the train to Exeter. Jonathan sleeping.

It seems only yesterday that the last entry was made, and yet how much between then, in Whitby and all the world before me, Jonathan away and no news of him; and now, married to Jonathan, Jonathan a solicitor, a partner, rich, master of his business, Mr. Hawkins dead and buried, and Jonathan with another attack that may harm him. Some day he may ask me about it. Down it all goes. I am rusty in my shorthand—see what unexpected prosperity does for us—so it may be as well to freshen it up again with an exercise anyhow. . . .

The service was very simple and very solemn. There were only ourselves and the servants there, one or two old friends of his from Exeter, his London agent, and a gentleman representing Sir John Paxton, the President of the Incorporated Law Society. Jonathan and I stood hand in hand, and we felt that our best and dearest friend was gone from us. . . .

We came back to town quietly, taking a 'bus to Hyde Park Corner. Jonathan thought it would interest me to go into the Row for a while, so we sat down; but there were very few people there, and it was sad-looking and desolate to see so many empty chairs. It made us think of the empty chair at home; so we got up and walked down Piccadilly. Jonathan was holding me by the arm, the way he used to in old days before I went to school. I felt it very improper, for you can't go on for some years teaching etiquette and decorum to other girls without the pedantry of it biting into yourself a bit; but it was Jonathan, and he was my husband, and we didn't know anybody who saw us—and we didn't care if they did—so on we walked. I was looking at a very beautiful girl, in a big cart-wheel hat, sitting in a victoria outside Giuliano's, when I felt Jonathan clutch my arm so tight that he hurt me, and he said under his breath: "My God!" I am always anxious about Jonathan, for I fear that some nervous fit may upset him again; so I turned to him quickly, and asked him what it was that disturbed him.

He was very pale, and his eyes seemed bulging out as, half in terror and half in amazement, he gazed at a tall, thin man, with a beaky nose and black moustache and pointed beard, who was also observing the pretty girl. He was looking at her so hard that he did not see either of us, and so I had a good view of him. His face was not a good face; it was hard, and cruel, and sensual, and his big white teeth, that looked all the whiter because his lips were so red, were pointed like an animal's. Jonathan kept staring at him, till I was afraid he would notice. I feared he might take it ill, he looked so fierce and nasty. I asked Jonathan why he was disturbed, and he answered, evidently thinking that I knew as much about it as he did: "Do you see who it is?"

"No, dear," I said; "I don't know him; who is it?" His answer seemed to shock and thrill me, for it was said as if he did not know that it was to me, Mina, to whom he was speaking:—

"It is the man himself!"

The poor dear was evidently terrified at something—very greatly terrified; I do believe that if he had not had me to lean on and to support him he would have sunk down. He kept staring; a man came out of the shop with a small parcel, and gave it to the lady, who then drove off. The dark man kept his eyes fixed on her, and when the carriage moved up Piccadilly he followed in the same direction, and hailed a hansom. Jonathan kept looking after him, and said, as if to himself:—

"I believe it is the Count, but he has grown young. My God, if this be so! Oh, my God! my God! If I only knew! if I only knew!" He was distressing himself so much that I feared to keep his mind on the subject by asking him any questions, so I remained silent. I drew him away quietly, and he, holding my arm, came easily. We walked a little farther, and then went in and sat for a while in the Green Park. It was a hot day for autumn, and there was a comfortable seat in a shady place. After a few minutes' staring at nothing, Jonathan's eyes closed, and he went quietly into a sleep, with his head on my shoulder. I thought it was the best thing for him, so did not disturb him. In about twenty minutes he woke up, and said to me quite cheerfully:—

"Why, Mina, have I been asleep? Oh, do forgive me for being so rude. Come, and we'll have a cup of tea somewhere." He had evidently forgotten all about the dark stranger, as in his illness he had forgotten all that this episode had reminded him of. I don't like this lapsing into forgetfulness; it may make or continue some injury to the brain. I must not ask him, for fear I shall do more harm than good; but I must somehow learn the facts of his journey abroad. The time is come, I fear, when I must open that parcel and know what is written. Oh, Jonathan, you will, I know, forgive me if I do wrong, but it is for your own dear sake.

Later.—A sad home-coming in every way—the house empty of the dear soul who was so good to us; Jonathan still pale and dizzy under a slight relapse of his malady; and now a telegram from Van Helsing, whoever he may be:—

"You will be grieved to hear that Mrs. Westenra died five days ago, and that Lucy died the day before yesterday. They were both buried to-day."

Oh, what a wealth of sorrow in a few words! Poor Mrs. Westenra! poor Lucy! Gone, gone, never to return to us! And poor, poor Arthur, to have lost such sweetness out of his life! God help us all to bear our troubles.

DR. SEWARD'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER 22.—It is all over. Arthur has gone back to Ring, and has taken Quincey Morris with him. What a fine fellow is Quincey! I believe in my heart of hearts that he suffered as much about Lucy's death as any of us; but he bore himself through it like a moral Viking. If America can go on breeding men like that, she will be a power in the world indeed. Van Helsing is lying down, having a rest preparatory to his journey. He goes over to Amsterdam to-night, but says he returns to-morrow night; that he only wants to make some arrangements which can only be made personally. He is to stop with me then, if he can; he says he has work to do in London which may take him some time. Poor old fellow! I fear that the strain of the past week has broken down even his iron strength. All the time of the burial he was, I could see, putting some terrible restraint on himself. When it was all over, we were standing beside Arthur, who, poor fellow, was speaking of his part in the operation where his blood had been transfused to his Lucy's veins; I could see Van Helsing's face grow white and purple by turns. Arthur was saying that he felt since then as if they two had been really married, and that she was his wife in the sight of God. None of us said a word of the other operations, and none of us ever shall. Arthur and Quincey went away together to the station, and Van Helsing and I came on here. The moment we were alone in the carriage he gave way to a regular fit of hysterics. He has denied to me since that it was hysterics, and insisted that it was only his sense of humour asserting itself under very terrible conditions. He laughed till he cried, and I had to draw down the blinds lest any one should see us and misjudge; and then he cried till he laughed again; and laughed and cried together, just as a woman does. I tried to be stern with him, as one is to a woman under the circumstances; but it had no effect. Men and women are so different in manifestations of nervous strength or weakness! Then when his face grew grave and stern again I asked him why his mirth, and why at such a time. His reply was in a way characteristic of him, for it was logical and forceful and mysterious. He said:—

"Ah, you don't comprehend, friend John. Do not think that I am not sad, though I laugh. See, I have cried even when the laugh did choke me. But no more think that I am all sorry when I cry, for the laugh he come just the same. Keep it always with you that laughter who knock at your door and say, 'May I come in?' is not the true laughter. No! he is a king, and he come when and how he like. He ask no person; he choose no time of suitability. He say, 'I am here.' Behold, in example, I grieve my heart out for that so sweet young girl; I give my blood for her, though I am old and worn; I give my time, my skill, my sleep; I let my other sufferers want that so she may have all. And yet I can laugh at her very grave—laugh when the clay from the spade of the sexton drop upon her coffin and say, 'Thud! thud!' to my heart, till it send back the blood from my cheek. My heart bleed for that poor boy—that dear boy, so of the age of mine own boy had I been so blessed that he live, and with his hair and eyes the same. There, you know now why I love him so. And yet when he say things that touch my husband-heart to the quick, and make my father-heart yearn to him as to no other man—not even to you, friend John, for we are more level in experiences than father and son—yet even at such moment King Laugh he come to me and shout and bellow in my ear, 'Here I am! here I am!' till the blood come dance back and bring some of the sunshine that he carry with him to my cheek. Oh, friend John, it is a strange world, a sad world, a world full of miseries, and woes, and troubles; and yet when King Laugh come he make them all dance to the tune he play. Bleeding hearts, and dry bones of the churchyard, and tears that burn as they fall—all dance together to the music that he make with that smileless mouth of him. And believe me, friend John, that he is good to come, and kind. Ah, we men and women are like ropes drawn tight with strain that pull us different ways. Then tears come; and, like the rain on the ropes, they brace us up, until, perhaps, the strain become too great, and we break. But King Laugh he come like the sunshine, and he ease off the strain again; and we bear to go on with our labour, what it may be."

I did not like to wound him by pretending not to see his idea; but, as I did not yet understand the cause of his laughter, I asked him. As he answered me his face grew stern, and he said in quite a different tone:—

"Oh, it was the grim irony of it all—this so lovely lady garlanded with flowers, that looked so fair as life, till one by one we wondered if she were truly dead; she laid in that so fine marble house in that lonely churchyard, where rest so many of her kin, laid there with the mother who loved her, and whom she loved; and that sacred bell going 'Toll! toll! toll!' so sad and slow; and those holy men, with the white garments of the angel, pretending to read books, and yet all the time their eyes never on the page; and all of us with the bowed head. And all for what? She is dead; so! Is it not?"

"Well, for the life of me, Professor," I said, "I can't see anything to laugh at in all that. Why, your explanation makes it a harder puzzle than before. But even if the burial service was comic, what about poor Art and his trouble? Why, his heart was simply breaking."

"Just so. Said he not that the transfusion of his blood to her veins had made her truly his bride?"

"Yes, and it was a sweet and comforting idea for him."

" Quite so. But there was a difficulty, friend John. If so that, then what about the others ? Ho, ho ! Then this so sweet maid is a polyandrist, and me, with my poor wife dead to me, but alive by Church's law, though no wits, all gone—even I, who am faithful husband to this now-no-wife, am bigamist."

" I don't see where the joke comes in there either ! " I said ; and I did not feel particularly pleased with him for saying such things. He laid his hand on my arm, and said :—

" Friend John, forgive me if I pain. I showed not my feeling to others when it would wound, but only to you, my old friend, whom I can trust. If you could have looked into my very heart then when I want to laugh ; if you could have done so when the laugh arrived ; if you could do so now, when King Laugh have packed up his crown and all that is to him—for he go far, far away from me, and for a long, long time —maybe you would perhaps pity me the most of all."

I was touched by the tenderness of his tone, and asked why.

" Because I know ! "

And now we are all scattered ; and for many a long day loneliness will sit over our roofs with brooding wings. Lucy lies in the tomb of her kin, a lordly death-house in a lonely churchyard, away from teeming London ; where the air is fresh, and the sun rises over Hampstead Hill, and where wild flowers grow of their own accord.

So I can finish this diary ; and God only knows if I shall ever begin another. If I do, or if I ever open this again, it will be to deal with different people and different themes ; for here at the end, where the romance of my life is told, ere I go back to take up the thread of my life-work, I say sadly and without hope,

" Finis."

The " Westminster Gazette," September 25

A Hampstead Mystery

The neighbourhood of Hampstead is just at present exercised with a series of events which seem to run on lines parallel to those of what was known to the writers of headlines as " The Kensington Horror," or " The Stabbing Woman," or " The Woman in Black." During the past two or three days several cases have occurred of young children straying from home or neglecting to return from their playing on the Heath. In all these cases the children were too young to give any properly intelligible account of themselves, but the consensus of their excuses is that they had been with a " bloofer lady." It has always been late in the evening when they have been missed, and on two occasions the children have not been found until early in the following morning. It is generally supposed in the neighbourhood that, as the first child missed gave as his reason for being away that a " bloofer lady " had asked him to come for a walk, the others had picked up the phrase and used it as occasion served. This is the more natural as the favourite game of the little ones at present is luring each other away by wiles. A correspondent writes us that to see some of the tiny tots pretending to be the " bloofer lady " is supremely funny. Some of our caricaturists might, he says, take a lesson in the irony of grotesque by comparing the reality and the picture. It is only in accordance with general principles of human nature that the " bloofer lady " should be the popular rôle at these *al fresco* performances. Our correspondent naïvely says that even Ellen Terry could not be so winningly attractive as some of these grubby-faced little children pretend—and even imagine themselves—to be.

There is, however, possibly a serious side to the question, for some of the children, indeed all who have been missed at night, have been slightly torn or wounded in the throat. The wounds seem such as might be made by a rat or a small dog, and although of not much importance individually, would tend to show that whatever animal inflicts them has a system or method of its own. The police of the division have been instructed to keep a sharp look-out for straying children, especially when very young, in and around Hampstead Heath, and for any stray dog which may be about.

The " Westminster Gazette," September 25
Extra Special

THE HAMPSTEAD HORROR

Another Child Injured

The " Bloofer Lady "

We have just received intelligence that another child, missed last night, was only discovered late in the morning under a furze bush at the Shooter's Hill side of Hampstead Heath, which is, perhaps, less frequented than the other parts. It has the same tiny wound in the throat as has been noticed in other cases. It was terribly weak, and looked quite emaciated. It too, when partially restored, had the common story to tell of being lured away by the " bloofer lady."

CHAPTER XIV

Mina Harker's Journal

SEPTEMBER 23.—Jonathan is better after a bad night. I am so glad that he has plenty of work to do, for that keeps his mind off the terrible things ; and oh, I am rejoiced that he is not now weighed down with the responsibility of his new position. I knew he would be true to himself, and now how proud I am to see my Jonathan rising to the height of his advancement and keeping pace in all ways with the duties that come upon him. He will be away all day till late, for he said he could not lunch at home.

My household work is done, so I shall take his foreign journal, and lock myself up in my room and read it. . . .

September 24.—I hadn't the heart to write last night; that terrible record of Jonathan's upset me so. Poor dear! How he must have suffered, whether it be true or only imagination. I wonder if there is any truth in it at all. Did he get his brain fever, and then write all those terrible things; or had he some cause for it all? I suppose I shall never know, for I dare not open the subject to him. . . . And yet that man we saw yesterday! He seemed quite certain of him. . . . Poor fellow! I suppose it was the funeral upset him and sent his mind back on some train of thought. . . . He believes it all himself. I remember how on our wedding-day he said: "Unless some solemn duty come upon me to go back to the bitter hours, asleep or awake, mad or sane." There seems to be through it all some thread of continuity. . . . That fearful Count was coming to London. . . . "If it should be, and he came to London, with its teeming millions." . . . There may be a solemn duty; and if it come we must not shrink from it. . . . I shall be prepared. I shall get my typewriter this very hour and begin transcribing. Then we shall be ready for other eyes if required. And if it be wanted, then, perhaps, if I am ready, poor Jonathan may not be upset, for I can speak for him and never let him be troubled or worried with it at all. If ever Jonathan quite gets over the nervousness he may want to tell me of it all, and I can ask him questions and find out things, and see how I may comfort him.

Letter, Van Helsing to Mrs. Harker

"*September* 24.

"Dear Madam,— (*Confidence.*)

"I pray you to pardon my writing, in that I am so far friend as that I sent to you sad news of Miss Lucy Westenra's death. By the kindness of Lord Godalming, I am empowered to read her letters and papers, for I am deeply concerned about certain matters vitally important. In them I find some letters from you, which show how great friends you were and how you love her. Oh, Madam Mina, by that love, I implore you, help me. It is for other's good that I ask—to redress your great wrong, and to lift much and terrible troubles—that may be more great than you can know. May it be that I see you? You can trust me. I am friend of Dr. John Seward and of Lord Godalming (that was Arthur of Miss Lucy). I must keep it private for the present from all. I should come to Exeter to see you at once if you tell me I am privilege to come, and where and when. I implore your pardon, madam. I have read your letters to poor Lucy, and know how good you are and how your husband suffer; so I pray you, if it may be, enlighten him not, lest it may harm. Again your pardon, and forgive me. "Van Helsing."

Telegram, Mrs. Harker to Van Helsing

"*September* 25.—Come to-day by quarter-past ten train if you can catch it. Can see you any time you call.

"Wilhelmina Harker."

Mina Harker's Journal

September 25.—I cannot help feeling terribly excited as the time draws near for the visit of Dr. Van Helsing, for somehow I expect it will throw some light upon Jonathan's sad experience; and as he attended poor dear Lucy in her last illness, he can tell me all about her. That is the reason of his coming; it is concerning Lucy and her sleep-walking, and not about Jonathan. Then I shall never know the real truth now! How silly I am. That awful journal gets hold of my imagination and tinges everything with something of its own colour. Of course, it is about Lucy. That habit came back to the poor dear, and that awful night on the cliff must have made her ill. I had almost forgotten in my own affairs how ill she was afterwards. She must have told him of her sleep-walking adventure on the cliff, and that I knew all about it; and now he wants me to tell him about it, so that he may understand. I hope I did right in not saying anything of it to Mrs. Westenra; I should never forgive myself if any act of mine, were it even a negative one, brought harm on poor dear Lucy. I hope, too, Dr. Van Helsing will not blame me; I have had so much trouble and anxiety of late that I feel I cannot bear more just at present.

I suppose a cry does us all good at times—clears the air as other rain does. Perhaps it was reading the journal yesterday that upset me, and then Jonathan went away this morning to stay away from me a whole day and night, the first time we have been parted since our marriage. I do hope the dear fellow will take care of himself and that nothing will occur to upset him. It is two o'clock, and the doctor will be here soon now. I shall say nothing of Jonathan's journal unless he asks me. I am so glad I have type-written out my own journal, so that, in case he asks about Lucy, I can hand it to him; it will save much questioning.

Later.—He has come and gone. Oh, what a strange meeting, and how it all makes my head whirl round; I feel like one in a dream. Can it be all possible, or even a part of it? If I had not read Jonathan's journal first, I should never have accepted even a possibility. Poor, poor, dear Jonathan! How he must have suffered. Please the good God all this may not upset him again. I shall try to save him from it; but it may be even a consolation and a help to him—terrible though it be and awful in its consequences—to know for certain that his eyes and ears and brain did not deceive him, and that it is all true. It may be that it is the doubt which haunts him; that when the doubt is removed, no matter which—waking or dreaming—may prove the truth, he will be more satisfied and better able

to bear the shock. Dr. Van Helsing must be a good man as well as a clever one if he is Arthur's friend and Dr. Seward's, and if they brought him all the way from Holland to look after Lucy. I feel from having seen him that he *is* good and kind and of a noble nature. When he comes to-morrow I shall ask him about Jonathan ; and then, please God, all this sorrow and anxiety may lead to a good end. I used to think I would like to practise interviewing ; Jonathan's friend on the *Exeter News* told him that memory was everything in such work—that you must be able to put down exactly almost every word spoken, even if you had to refine some of it afterwards. Here was a rare interview ; I shall try to record it *verbatim*.

It was half-past two o'clock when the knock came. I took my courage *à deux mains* and waited. In a few minutes Mary opened the door, and announced "Dr. Van Helsing."

I rose and bowed, and he came towards me; a man of medium height, strongly built, with his shoulders set back over a broad, deep chest and a neck well balanced on the trunk as the head is on the neck. The poise of the head strikes one at once as indicative of thought and power; the head is noble, well-sized, broad, and large behind the ears. The face, clean-shaven, shows a hard, square chin, a large, resolute, mobile mouth, a good-sized nose, rather straight, but with quick, sensitive nostrils, that seem to broaden as the big, bushy eyebrows come down and the mouth tightens. The forehead is broad and fine, rising at first almost straight and then sloping back above two bumps or ridges wide apart; such a forehead that the reddish hair cannot possibly tumble over it, but falls naturally back and to the sides. Big, dark blue eyes are set widely apart, and are quick and tender or stern with the man's moods. He said to me :

"Mrs. Harker, is it not?" I bowed assent.

"That was Miss Mina Murray?" Again I assented.

"It is Mina Murray that I came to see, that was friend of that poor dear child Lucy Westenra. Madam Mina, it is on account of the dead I come."

"Sir," I said, "you could have no better claim on me that that you were a friend and helper of Lucy Westenra." And I held out my hand. He took it and said tenderly :

"Oh, Madam Mina, I knew that the friend of that poor lily girl must be good, but I had yet to learn——" He finished his speech with a courtly bow. I asked him what it was that he wanted to see me about, so he at once began :

"I have read your letters to Miss Lucy. Forgive me, but I had to begin to inquire somewhere, and there was none to ask. I know that you were with her at Whitby. She sometimes kept a diary—you need not look surprised, Madam Mina; it was begun after you had left, and was made in imitation of you—and in that diary she traces by inference certain things to a sleep-walking in which she put down that you saved her. In great perplexity then I come to you, and ask you out of your so much kindness to tell me all of it that you remember."

"I can tell you, I think, Dr. Van Helsing, all about it."

"Ah, then you have a good memory for facts, for details? It is not always so with young ladies."

"No, doctor, but I wrote it all down at the time. I can show it to you if you like."

"Oh, Madam Mina, I will be grateful; you will do me much favour." I could not resist the temptation of mystifying him a bit—I suppose it is some of the taste of the original apple that remains still in our mouths—so I handed him the shorthand diary. He took it with a grateful bow, and said :

"May I read it?"

"If you wish," I answered as demurely as I could. He opened it, and for the instant his face fell. Then he stood up and bowed.

"Oh, you so clever woman!" he said. "I long knew that Mr. Jonathan was a man of much thankfulness; but see, his wife have all the good things. And will you not so much honour me and so help me as to read it for me? Alas! I know not the shorthand." By this time my little joke was over, and I was almost ashamed; so I took the typewritten copy from my work-basket and handed it to him.

"Forgive me," I said : "I could not help it; but I had been thinking that it was of dear Lucy that you wished to ask, and so that you might not have to wait—not on my account, but because I know your time must be precious—I have written it out on the typewriter for you."

He took it, and his eyes glistened. "You are so good," he said. "And may I read it now? I may want to ask you some things when I have read."

"By all means," I said, "read it over whilst I order lunch; and then you can ask me questions whilst we eat." He bowed and settled himself in a chair with his back to the light, and became absorbed in the papers, whilst I went to see after lunch, chiefly in order that he might not be disturbed. When I came back I found him walking hurriedly up and down the room, his face all ablaze with excitement. He rushed up to me and took me by both hands.

"Oh, Madam Mina," he said, "how can I say what I owe to you? This paper is as sunshine. It opens the gate to me. I am daze, I am dazzle, with so much light; and yet clouds roll in behind the light every time. But that you do not, cannot, comprehend. Oh, but I am grateful to you, you so clever woman. Madam"—he said this very solemnly—"if ever Abraham Van Helsing can do anything for you or yours, I trust you will let me know. It will be pleasure and delight if I may serve you as a friend; as a friend, but all I have ever learned,

all I can ever do, shall be for you and those you love. There are darknesses in life, and there are lights; you are one of the lights. You will have happy life and good life, and your husband will be blessed in you."

"But, doctor, you praise me too much, and—and you do not know me."

"Not know you—I, who am old, and who have studied all my life men and women; I, who have made my specialty the brain and all that belongs to him and all that follow from him! And I have read your diary that you have so goodly written for me, and which breathes out truth in every line. I, who have read your so sweet letter to poor Lucy of your marriage and your trust, not know you! Oh, Madam Mina, good women tell all their lives, and by day and by hour and by minute, such things that angels can read; and we men who wish to know have in us something of angels' eyes. Your husband is noble nature, and you are noble, too, for you trust, and trust cannot be where there is mean nature. And your husband—tell me of him. Is he quite well? Is all that fever gone, and is he strong and hearty?" I saw here an opening to ask him about Jonathan, so I said:

"He was almost recovered, but he has been greatly upset by Mr. Hawkins' death."

He interrupted:

"Oh, yes, I know, I know. I have read your last two letters." I went on:

"I suppose this upset him, for when we were in town on Thursday last he had a sort of shock."

"A shock, and after brain fever so soon! That was not good. What kind of shock was it?"

"He thought he saw someone who recalled something terrible, something which led to his brain fever." And here the whole thing seemed to overwhelm me in a rush. The pity for Jonathan, the horror which he experienced, the whole fearful mystery of his diary, and the fear that has been brooding over me ever since, all came in a tumult. I suppose I was hysterical, for I threw myself on my knees and held up my hands to him, and implored him to make my husband well again. He took my hands and raised me up, and made me sit on the sofa, and sat by me; he held my hand in his, and said to me with, oh, such infinite sweetness:

"My life is a barren and lonely one, and so full of work that I have not had much time for friendships; but since I have been summoned to here by my friend John Seward I have known so many good people and seen such nobility that I feel more than ever—and it has grown with my advancing years—the loneliness of my life. Believe me, then, that I come here full of respect for you, and you have given me hope—hope, not in what I am seeking of, but that there are good women still left to make life happy—good women, whose lives and whose truths may make good lesson for the children that are to be. I am glad, glad, that I may here be of some use to you; for if your husband suffer, he suffer within the range of my study and experience. I promise you that I will gladly do *all* for him that I can—all to make his life strong and manly, and your life a happy one. Now you must eat. You are overwrought and perhaps over-anxious. Husband Jonathan would not like to see you so pale; and what he like not where he love, is not to his good. Therefore for his sake you must eat and smile. You have told me all about Lucy, and so now we shall not speak of it, lest it distress. I shall stay in Exeter to-night, for I want to think much over what you have told me, and when I have thought I will ask you questions, if I may. And then, too, you will tell me of husband Jonathan's trouble so far as you can, but not yet. You must eat now; afterwards you shall tell me all."

After lunch when we went back to the drawing-room, he said to me:

"And now tell me all about him." When it came to speaking to this great, learned man, I began to fear that he would think me a weak fool, and Jonathan a madman—that journal is all so strange—and I hesitated to go on. But he was so sweet and kind, and he had promised to help, and I trusted him, so I said:

"Dr. Van Helsing, what I have to tell you is so queer that you must not laugh at me or at my husband. I have been since yesterday in a sort of fever of doubt; you must be kind to me, and not think me foolish that I have even half believed some very strange things." He reassured me by his manner as well as his words when he said:

"Oh, my dear, if you only knew how strange is the matter regarding which I am here, it is you who would laugh. I have learned not to think little of anyone's belief, no matter how strange it be. I have tried to keep an open mind; and it is not the ordinary things of life that could close it, but the strange things, the extraordinary things, the things that make one doubt if they be mad or sane."

"Thank you, thank you, a thousand times! You have taken a weight off my mind. If you will let me, I shall give you a paper to read. It is long, but I have typewritten it out. It will tell you my trouble and Jonathan's. It is the copy of his journal when abroad, and all that happened. I dare not say anything of it; you will read for yourself and judge. And then when I see you, perhaps, you will be very kind and tell me what you think."

"I promise," he said as I gave him the papers; "I shall in the morning, so soon as I can, come and see you and your husband, if I may."

"Jonathan will be here at half-past eleven, and you must come to lunch with us and see him then; you could catch the quick 3.34 train,

(*Continued on page 150*)

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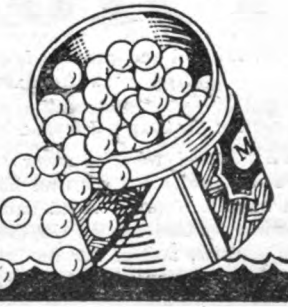

which will leave you at Paddington before eight." He was surprised at my knowledge of the trains off-hand, but he does not know that I have made up all the trains to and from Exeter, so that I may help Jonathan in case he is in a hurry.

So he took the papers with him and went away, and I sit here thinking—thinking I don't know what.

Letter (by hand), Van Helsing to Mrs. Harker

"*September* 25, 6 *o'clock.*

"Dear Madam Mina,—

"I have read your husband's so wonderful diary. You may sleep without doubt. Strange and terrible as it is, it is *true!* I will pledge my life on it. It may be worse for others; but for him and you there is no dread. He is a noble fellow; and let me tell you from experience of men, that one who would do as he did in going down that wall and to that room—ay, and going a second time—is not one to be injured in permanence by a shock. His brain and his heart are all right; this I swear, before I have even seen him; so be at rest. I shall have much to ask him of other things. I am blessed that to-day I come to see you, for I have learn all at once so much that again I am dazzle—dazzle more than ever, and I must think.

"Yours the most faithful,

"ABRAHAM VAN HELSING."

Letter, Mrs. Harker to Van Helsing

September 25, 6.30 *p.m.*

"My dear Dr. Van Helsing,—

"A thousand thanks for your kind letter, which has taken a great weight off my mind. And yet, if it be true, what terrible things there are in the world, and what an awful thing if that man, that monster, be really in London! I fear to think. I have this moment, whilst writing, had a wire from Jonathan, saying that he leaves by the 6.25 to-night from Launceston and will be here at 10.18, so that I shall have no fear to-night. Will you, therefore, instead of lunching with us, please come to breakfast at eight o'clock, if this be not too early for you? You can get away, if you are in a hurry, by the 10.30 train, which will bring you to Paddington by 2.35. Do not answer this, as I shall take it that, if I do not hear, you will come to breakfast.

"Believe me,

"Your faithful and grateful friend,

"MINA HARKER."

JONATHAN HARKER'S JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 26.—I thought never to write in this diary again, but the time has come. When I got home last night Mina had supper ready, and when we had supped she told me of Van Helsing's visits, and of her having given him the two diaries copied out, and of how anxious she has been about me. She showed me in the doctor's letters that all I wrote down was true. It seems to have made a new man of me. It was the doubt as to the reality of the whole thing that knocked me over. I felt impotent, and in the dark, and distrustful. But, now that I *know*, I am not afraid, even of the Count. He has succeeded after all, then, in his design in getting to London, and it was he I saw. He has got younger, and how? Van Helsing is the man to unmask him and hunt him out, if he is anything like what Mina says. We sat late, and talked it over. Mina is dressing, and I shall call at the hotel in a few minutes and bring him over. . . .

He was, I think, surprised to see me. When I came into the room where he was, and introduced myself, he took me by the shoulder and turned my face round to the light, and said, after a sharp scrutiny:

"But Madam Mina told me you were ill, that you had had a shock." It was so funny to hear my wife called "Madam Mina" by this kindly, strong-faced old man. I smiled, and said:

"I *was* ill, I *have* had a shock; but you have cured me already."

"And how?"

"By your letter to Mina last night. I was in doubt, and then everything took a hue of unreality, and I did not know what to trust, even the evidence of my own senses. Not knowing what to trust, I did not know what to do; and so had only to keep on working in what had hitherto been the groove of my life. The groove ceased to avail me, and I mistrusted myself. Doctor, you don't know what it is to doubt everything, even yourself. No, you don't; you couldn't with eyebrows like yours." He seemed pleased, and laughed as he said:

"So! You are physiognomist. I learn more here with each hour. I am with so much pleasure coming to you to breakfast; and, oh, sir, you will pardon praise from an old man, but you are blessed in your wife." I would listen to him go on praising Mina for a day, so I simply nodded and stood silent.

"She is one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth. So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist—and that, let me tell you, is much in this age, so sceptical and selfish. And you, sir—I have read all the letters to poor Miss Lucy and some of them speak of you, so I know you since some days from the knowing of others; but I have seen your true self since last night. You will give me your hand, will you not? And let us be friends for all our lives."

We shook hands, and he was so earnest and so kind that it made me quite choky.

"And now," he said, "may I ask you for some more help? I have a great task to do, and

(*Continued on page* 152)

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your going to Transylvania? Later on I may ask more help and of a different kind; but at first this will do."

"Look here, sir," I said, "does what you have to do concern the Count?"

"It does," he said solemnly.

"Then I am with you heart and soul. As you go by the 10.30 train, you will not have time to read them; but I shall get the bundle of papers. You can take them with you and read them in the train."

After breakfast I saw him to the station. When we were parting he said: "Perhaps you will come to town if I send to you, and take Madam Mina, too."

"We shall both come when you will," I said.

I had got him the morning papers and the London papers of the previous night, and while we were talking at the carriage window, waiting for the train to start, he was turning them over. His eye suddenly seemed to catch something in one of them, the *Westminster Gazette*—I knew it by the colour—and he grew quite white. He read something intently, groaning to himself: "Mein Gott! Mein Gott! So soon! so soon!" I do not think he remembered me at the moment. Just then the whistle blew, and the train moved off. This recalled him to himself, and he leaned out of the window and waved his hand, calling out: "Love to Madam Mina; I shall write so soon as ever I can."

DR. SEWARD'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER 26.—Truly there is no such thing as finality. Not a week since I said "Finis," and yet here I am starting fresh again, or rather going on with the same record. Until this afternoon I had no cause to think of what is done. Renfield had become, to all intents, as sane as he ever was. He was already well ahead with his fly business; and he had just started in the spider line also; so he had not been any trouble to me. I had a letter from Arthur, written on Sunday, and from it I gather that he is bearing up wonderfully well. Quincey Morris is with him, and that is much of a help, for he himself is a bubbling well of good spirits. Quincey wrote me a line, too, and from him I hear that Arthur is beginning to recover something of his old buoyancy; so as to them all my mind is at rest. As for myself, I was settling down to my work with the enthusiasm which I used to have for it, so that I might fairly have said that the wound which poor Lucy left on me was becoming cicatrized. Everything is, however, now reopened; and what is to be the end God only knows. I have an idea that Van Helsing thinks he knows, too, but he will only let out enough at a time to whet curiosity. He went to Exeter yesterday, and stayed there all night. To-day he came back, and almost bounded into the room at about half-past five o'clock, and thrust last night's *Westminster Gazette* into my hand.

"What do you think of that?" he asked as he stood back and folded his arms.

I looked over the paper, for I really did not know what he meant; but he took it from me and pointed out a paragraph about children being decoyed away at Hampstead. It did not convey much to me, until I reached a passage where it described small punctured wounds on their throats. An idea struck me, and I looked up.

"Well?" he said.

"It is like poor Lucy's."

"And what do you make of it?"

"Simply that there is some cause in common. Whatever it was that injured her has injured them." I did not quite understand his answer:

"That is true indirectly, but not directly."

"How do you mean, Professor?" I asked. I was a little inclined to take his seriousness lightly—for, after all, four days of rest and freedom from burning, harrowing anxiety does help to restore one's spirits—but when I saw his face, it sobered me. Never, even in the midst of our despair about poor Lucy, had he looked more stern.

"Tell me!" I said. "I can hazard no opinion. I do not know what to think, and I have no data on which to found a conjecture."

"Do you mean to tell me, friend John, that you have no suspicion as to what poor Lucy died of; not after all the hints given, not only by events, but by me?"

"Of nervous prostration following on great loss or waste of blood."

"And how the blood was lost or wasted?"

(To be continued in next month's "Argosy")

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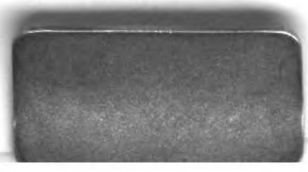

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